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ESSAYS ON MODERN DRAMATISTS

BY

WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY THEATRE

ESSAYS ON MODERN NOVELISTS

ESSAYS ON RUSSIAN NOVELISTS

ESSAYS ON BOOKS

READING THE BIBLE

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THE ADVANCE OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

THE ADVANCE OF ENGLISH POETRY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

ARCHIBALD MARSHALL

BROWNING: HOW TO KNOW HIM

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ENGLISH ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

ESSAYS ON MODERN DRAMATISTS

BY

WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

Lampson Professor of English Literature
at Yale

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TO

ARTHUR TWINING HADLEY

PRESIDENT OF YALE UNIVERSITY

1899 — 1921

WITH LOYALTY AND AFFECTION

8304

PREFACE

I have not selected these dramatists because I believe them to be exclusively the best, but because I chose to write about them. Their work interests me, and they are modern. Four of them are alive, and the other two ought to be.

The last thirty years will probably be regarded by future historians as a great creative period in the drama. Perhaps contemporary criticism gains in intimacy what it loses in authority. If some of the Elizabethans had only written less about Seneca, and more about Shakespeare!

W. L. P.

Yale University
Tuesday, 4 *January* 1921

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ESSAYS ON MODERN DRAMATISTS

J. M. BARRIE

Perhaps the most intelligent attitude to take toward the plays of J. M. Barrie is unconditional surrender. If one unreservedly yields one's mind and heart to their enfolding charm, then one will understand them. Otherwise never. Understanding of many things comes only through submission. A work of art is as sublime as a work of nature; no one can appreciate natural scenery without yielding to it. Men with beam-eyes are always looking for motes. We know that there are human creatures who find the Grand Canyon of the Colorado disappointing.

For it is an unfortunate fact that many persons lack the blessed gift of admiration. These self-deceived worthies imagine that their powers of criticism are sharpened by the absence of enthusiasm, when they are really destroyed. Tolstoi was one of the

first creative artists and one of the last critics. His absurdity as a critic rose from his lack of admiration, from his inability to surrender. He often complained that friends would not listen to him when he tried to convince them that Shakespeare was a bad writer. "I spoke to Turgenev about it, and he would not argue; he only turned sadly away." Naturally; he was sorry for Tolstoi. Why argue with a blind man who insists there is nothing in the world worth looking at?

J. M. Barrie is the foremost English-writing dramatist of our time, and his plays, taken together, make the most important contribution to the English drama since Sheridan. He unites the chief qualities of his contemporaries, and yet the last word to describe his work would be the word eclectic. For he is the most original of them all. He has the intellectual grasp of Galsworthy, the moral earnestness of Jones, the ironical mirth of Synge, the unearthly fantasy of Dunsany, the consistent logic of Ervine, the wit of Shaw, the technical excellence of Pinero. In addition to these qualities, he has a combination of charm and tenderness possessed by

no other man. I am aware that the last two sentences will seem to many readers mere hyperbole. I will refer such doubters to the published plays.

Years ago, that grand old golfer, Harry Vardon, said, "It is easier to make a reputation than to keep it." This truth applies to works of art as well as to golf. Think how enormously the reputation made by *The Little Minister* was heightened by *The Admirable Crichton, Peter Pan,* and *What Every Woman Knows!* Every woman knows now that while no one will be able to guess the theme of Barrie's next play, nor its conclusion after the first act, it will be worth seeing and hearing, it will not disappoint. It is something to have maintained a high level of production for twenty-three years, and to have gained the confidence of hundreds of thousands.

J. M. Barrie ought to be the happiest man in the world. Not because he has contributed so much happiness to so many people, though that ought to be a source of joy in dark hours, but because he is one of those extremely rare artists who can actually embody their conceptions. His dreams come true. At his

desk, he is visited by visions so fantastic that he must often laugh aloud in solitude; but the amazing thing is that he can make the whole world see them *as he sees them.* The tragic disparity between conception and execution that tortures even accomplished artists, vanishes here before the creative power of genius.

That literary men cannot write plays is a lusty myth. Authors of inane, reverberating claptrap never tire of repeating it. Yet the three foremost playwrights of the modern English Theatre, Shaw, Galsworthy, Barrie, were all distinguished novelists before anyone thought of them in connexion with the footlights. So was St. John Ervine; Dunsany was a writer of prose tales, and John Drinkwater a professional poet. To command an excellent literary style is not necessarily a fatal handicap.

Although Mr. Barrie had written a number of books before *The Little Minister* appeared in 1891, it was this thrilling story that literally spread his fame over the wide earth. One of the most fortunate results of its publication was that it attracted the attention of Stevenson, on the other side of the world.

Stevenson's heart was always in Scotland; and the appearance of a good book by a Scotsman gave him a thrill quite unlike any other sensation. Twice he essayed to write a letter to his young countryman, and succeeded only at the third attempt. He seems to have been instantly aware of the extraordinary powers of the new man, and equally certain that *The Little Minister* was only a prologue to the swelling act. In February 1892, Stevenson overcame a shyness characteristic of both men (surely not of all Scots) and wrote, "you are one of four that have come to the front since I was watching and had a corner of my own to watch, and there is no reason, unless it be in these mysterious tides that ebb and flow, and make and mar and murder the works of poor scribblers, why you should not do work of the best order. . . . We are both Scots besides, and I suspect both rather Scotty Scots. . . . Lastly, I have gathered we had both made our stages in the metropolis of the winds, our Virgil's 'grey metropolis,' and I count that a lasting bond. No place so brands a man." In December of the same year, having read *A Window in Thrums,* Stevenson wrote again, "I don't say

that it is better than *The Minister* . . . but somehow it is—well, I read it last anyway, and it's by Barrie. And he's the man for my money. The glove is a great page; it is startlingly original, and as true as death and judgment. . . . Thomas affects me as a lie —I beg your pardon; doubtless he was somebody you knew, that leads people so far astray. The actual is not the true. I am proud to think you are a Scotchman. . . . There are two of us now that the Shirra [Walter Scott] might have patted on the head. And please do not think when I thus seem to bracket myself with you, that I am wholly blinded with vanity. Jess is beyond my frontier line; I could not touch her skirt; I have no such glamour of twilight on my pen. I am a capable artist; but it begins to look to me as if you were a man of genius. Take care of yourself for my sake." A year later, December 1893, at the close of a longish letter, Stevenson was bold enough to write, "Whereupon I make you my salute with the firm remark that it is time to be done with trifling and give us a great book." Despite his enthusiasm for *Thrums* and *The Little Minister,* Stevenson seems to have

known well enough that Barrie would surpass them; anyhow, he did. He replied by writing *Sentimental Tommy,* which Stevenson never lived to see in print, but the character and plot awakened his liveliest curiosity, all the more that in some features he was the hero; had he lived to see it completed, he would have welcomed it as one of the great British novels, which it undoubtedly is. The evidences of amateurishness in *The Little Minister* vanished, and we have the work of a master's hand.

It is an interesting fact that in the early nineties, two novelists of genius—who were later to become intimate friends—were both struggling to win distinction on the British stage; J. M. Barrie and Henry James. After a few false starts, the former fairly surpassed expectation; the latter totally failed. The reasons for this failure are conclusively though unconsciously given by the aspirant himself, in the wonderful *Letters,* published in 1920. And the main reason is not because Mr. James failed to master the technique of the stage, while Mr. Barrie succeeded; the failure was inherent in the temperament and mental processes of the great American. In

order to achieve the success in the theatre that he reached in short stories, novels, and literary criticism, Henry James would have required a play twelve hours long, a dialogue enunciated with the deliberation of a glacier, and an intellectual audience endowed with divine patience. For the effect produced in his novels—of which I am almost a fanatical admirer—is produced by the accumulation of atoms; one pauses in reading, one reflects, one reads back, one finally sees; and then, after finishing the last page, one really ought to read the whole book through again in the light of the conclusion. There is hardly time for that method at the theatre; there, instead of an effect produced by a large collection of tiny units, one word, one gesture, one smile, or one silence must do it all.

Herein lies one of the chief elements in Mr. Barrie's success. He reveals a situation as a lightning flash reveals an object in gross darkness. It is probably necessary for ordinary aspirants to study the "technique of the drama"; I do not know, for I suppose I am the only white man who never wrote a play. But it is not necessary for genius. If a prize had been offered in 1605 for the best

treatise on dramatic construction, I do not think Shakespeare could have secured honourable mention; while it is probable that Ben Jonson would have carried off the palm. Mr. Barrie is a great playwright because he understands human nature, knows how to represent it in conversation and in action, has enormous sympathy with his characters, and what is equally important, has enormous sympathy with the audience. His plays are full of action; and yet the story of each play can usually be given in a few sentences. What is it then, keeps the audience at strained attention? If some character ask a question, we would not miss the answer for all the world. His people capture us almost instantly, because, while composing the play, their creator himself felt their reality. They were right there, in the room with him. He saw their faces and heard their voices. In a conversation with Mr. John D. Williams, he said, "It is my contemptible weakness, that if I say a character smiled vacuously, I must smile vacuously; if he frowns or leers, I frown or leer; if he is a coward and given to contortions, I cringe, or twist my legs until I have to stop writing to undo the knot. I bow

with him, eat with him, and gnaw my mustache with him. If the character be a lady with an exquisite laugh, I suddenly terrify you by laughing exquisitely. One reads of the astounding versatility of an actor who is stout and lean on the same evening, but what is he to the novelist who is a dozen persons within the hour? Morally, I fear, we must deteriorate; but that is a subject I may wisely edge away from."

Now this method, so delightfully described in the above conversation, is similar to the method used by the founder of modern French dramatic realism, Henry Becque. While he was writing his masterpiece, *Les Corbeaux,* in which every person has an almost intolerable air of reality, the author would rise, stand in front of a tall mirror, and go through an extraordinary series of gesticulations and grimaces corresponding to the appearance of his imagined men and women.

There is no doubt that shyness—so characteristic of the literary as distinguished from the rhetorical temperament—is an immense asset to a creative artist. Being a

mute in general conversation, especially in youth, having no part to play and praying to escape from, rather than to attract the general attention, the unavoidable hours spent in society, in eating, and in travel, are spent in acute observation. Men and women who cannot listen—who talk incessantly—are almost invariably poor judges of human nature; their loquacity is both cause and effect of this ignorance. Mr. Barrie, more questioned than questioning, is an admirable listener; in a long conversation I once had with him, I was both gratified and ashamed by the serious attention I received. The capacity to observe, combined with an endless capacity for human sympathy, are evident in all his literary work.

A certain gentleness goes with understanding; your robustious fellows do not know much about men and women. There are many men whose family fireside conversation is a succession of stump speeches; do their wives understand them or do they not? Do you think they understand their wives? Is not the silent listener at the hearth often a judge as well as an audience?

(By the way, how much better it is to listen to a stump speech that sounds like intimate conversation, than to etc.)

The year 1891 was memorable, for in that year Barrie published his first famous novel, *The Little Minister,* and made his first appearance on any stage. With Mr. Marriott-Watson as collaborator, he produced a drama that had a run of exactly one day. The play was *Richard Savage,* and I wish I knew where I could lay my hands on a copy, for it would be interesting not only in itself, but for its *ex post facto* potentialities. Some twenty-two years ago, Mr. Edward Morton gave an entertaining account of it, by which we learn that it was a romantic drama of the eighteenth century, with real persons, Steele, Savage, and Jacob Tonson. The prologue was written by W. E. Henley, and the scenes that followed were filled with plots and counter-plots, strange oaths and the clashing of swords. Mr. Morton says that the future dramatist is revealed "in the scene in which Steele frees two lovers from an irksome engagement to marry, from which both are eager to be released, and leaves each disposed to think the other has been called upon to

make a sacrifice." This situation, I may add, Barrie repeated in *Walker, London.*

One would think that the prodigious success of *The Little Minister* and the failure of *Richard Savage* would indicate to the author his true "line." But Barrie, encouraged by success, was inspired by failure, for in the same year he produced two other plays of no importance, *Ibsen's Ghost* and *Becky Sharp.* The former was an unsuccessful parody on Ibsen, the preliminary necessary study of the Scandinavian genius bearing fruit later in *The Twelve-Pound Look* and in *The Will.* The other trifle was made by arranging the language of Thackeray.

These three finger-exercises merely indicate growing facility in practice; all depends on some element outside of the author's mind. He hitched his wagon, not to a star, but to the nearest convenient post. In 1892, however, he wrote a purely original play, which, devoid of even a suggestion of literary value, indicated mastery of the playwright's art. This is *Walker, London,* produced at Toole's Theatre, London, on 25 February 1892. The entire action takes place on a houseboat on the Thames, and the humour—it is pure

farce—arises from a case of mistaken identity. The ideas in Ibsen's *Doll's House*—which are to be taken seriously later in *The Twelve-Pound Look,* are plentifully ridiculed here. The strangest thing about *Walker*—when one remembers the later plays—is that it betrays no sign of its author's literary ability. The difficulty with most plays is that they are all talk and no action. Barrie seemed to feel that danger, for we have here a rapid succession of farcical situations—only the small boy showing anything resembling the quality of the later work. The "technique" is admirable; the playwright set himself a difficult task, and performed it in the smoothest manner. The moderate success of this amusing farce was a real peril to its author, for had he continued in this vein, he would have been a popular caterer, instead of a great dramatist. Even so it seems incredible that the creator of *The Admirable Crichton* can be the manufacturer of *Walker, London.* Perhaps, having learned technique in that farce, he felt that it had served him well.

The next year, with Conan Doyle as partner, he wrote *Jane Annie; or the Good Con-*

duct Prize, in which the small boy Caddie was the chief character and made the success of the piece.

Although neither *Walker, London* nor *Jane Annie* gave Barrie any reputation, they indicate his determination to succeed in a difficult art. He must have written to Stevenson about the former, and perhaps confided to him something of his ambition, for in November 1892, we find a significant sentence in a letter from R. L. S. After outlining the plot of what was to be his masterpiece, *Weir of Hermiston,* Stevenson says, " Braxfield [Hermiston] is my *grand premier;* or since you are so much involved in the British drama, let me say my heavy lead."

After four years of faithful effort, he produced in 1895 *The Professor's Love Story,* his first successful play, which was revived in London in the season of 1916–1917. This has always been a favourite of its author's, not merely for the charm of sentiment in it, but because it gave him public recognition as a dramatist.

In the year 1897 his fame as a playwright equalled his fame as a novelist—and the same book is responsible for this right and left

shot, *The Little Minister*. It was the fashion at that time to turn "best sellers" into plays, a fashion that began with *Trilby* and *The Prisoner of Zenda,* and continued until every one wearied of it. Nearly all of these dramatised novels were grotesquely inept; and perhaps Mr. Barrie was led to make his attempt in order to show how it ought to be done. "If the public will insist on having their favourite fiction-characters incarnate, let us have the process artistic." The author did not hesitate to alter many details, for he was forced to change time-exposures into snap-shots. The play is even better than the book—each person is sharply individualised, and by a word or a look both character and biography are revealed. Jean is walking to church, and on being accosted, almost intones the following: "I can neither hear nor see. I am wearing my best alpaca."

In those days Mr. Norman Hapgood was a professional dramatic critic. He went to see *The Little Minister* five times, and it never staled. He wrote, "The public like *The Little Minister,* and there is more skill in it than in the whole work of many playwrights who pretend to a place just ahead of the age.

There is no superfluous word, scene, or movement, no excrescence and no self-consciousness, but a steady movement carries the story directly, with a delicate, artificial, and yet human touch, through devices as fresh as they are moderate. The comedy line just this side of farce is followed with an unerring ability which makes the play—cheerful, easy and distinct—as charming to the simple as it is to the shrewd."

There is another reason why we should always hold this drama in grateful remembrance. It was the establishment in America of an alliance between Mr. Barrie and Mr. Charles Frohman as manager, with Miss Maude Adams as chief impersonator—a position for which she was foreordained. Although I do not believe either in the managerial monopoly or in the star-system, and will never cease to pray for that happy time when all the cities in America can have the opportunity of seeing a new Barrie play at the same moment—if we must have the monopoly and the star, nothing could have been better than this alliance in business and in art. Three things may be remembered to the honour of Charles Frohman: he was loved,

trusted, respected by J. M. Barrie; he never made a written contract with anybody, his word always being sufficient; just before the *Lusitania* sank, on being asked if he were afraid of death, he replied with a smile, "Why, I have always looked upon death as the greatest of all adventures."

The stunning success of *The Little Minister* was followed by six lean years, during which Mr. Barrie's career as a dramatist was identified in the popular mind with the clever remodeling of one sensational novel. In 1900 appeared the sequel to *Sentimental Tommy,* called *Tommy and Grizel,* which is perhaps as good as most sequels. *Sentimental Tommy* gave evidence of inspiration; *Tommy and Grizel* of perspiration. After he had cleansed his bosom of this perilous stuff, he made the year 1903 memorable by producing three original plays, *Little Mary,* a farce; *Quality Street,* a light comedy; *The Admirable Crichton,* the greatest English drama of modern times.

The first of these is a trifle light as air; it has the essence of laughter. The second is full of grace and full of charm; it will live longer than thousands of so-called serious

plays. It was highly successful during its first season, and twelve years later was revived with every sign of popular approbation. The ingredients are kindly mixed; it is made up of humour, pathos, romance, and mystery. Like his first attempt, it is a romantically realistic drama of the eighteenth century, but this time the hand that fashioned it had attained mastery. When it revisited the stage during the World War, the opening scene startled the audience: "Miss Fanny is reading aloud from a library book while the others sew or knit. They are making garments for our brave soldiers now far away fighting the Corsican ogre."

As a series of pictures, *Quality Street* has all the charm of *Cranford;* as a stage-play it is a delicate bit of confectionery, a Whimsy cake. But *The Admirable Crichton* is meat for men. It has given solid nourishment to democratic ideals for seventeen years and if its substance could be universally and thoroughly absorbed, it really would make the world safe for democracy. Men of letters have always done more for democracy than statesmen.

I doubt if we shall ever penetrate to the

last significance, to the final essence, of the play. Every time I read it there is a new revelation, with a hint of something vastly important not plainly shown. Its philosophy contains a disturbing challenge to the audience, as every good drama should do. Instead of a manufactured puzzle with a trick solution—a common notion of what plays should be—it leaves the spectators unsatisfied. Instead of merely drawing our attention to the characters in the story, it directs imperiously our attention to the structure of society, to life itself. Call it unreal, call it fantastical, if you like; its scenery may be romantic, but its thought is realistic. It is founded on the basal traits in human nature, and on the history of the development of human society. Crichton is a pragmatist; the Truth is that power, not ourselves, which works for efficiency. Nature is his goddess; and the natural life in London may be exactly contrary to the natural life on a desert island. He believes in the only true form of democracy—not the nose-counting method, but a system of representative government, where the best men are chosen not as the agents of the majority that elected them, but as free-

minded rulers, who will use their own judgment for the best interests of those less fitted to assume responsibility.

Crichton is a born aristocrat, like every superman. His disgust at the counterfeit radicalism of Lord Loam in the early scenes, where an unnatural tea-party once a month is forced on the unwilling household above and below stairs, is the logical antagonism of a man who rules below as his Lordship rules above. As soon as the conventions of society disappear before the importunate necessities of nature, we find Crichton not only ruling, but surrounding himself with all the outward signs of majesty, even as the First Consul became the Emperor.

In a very wise book we are told that among those things for which the earth is disquieted, and which it cannot bear, is a servant when he reigneth. The earth presumably means organised society. Many instances of the failure of this experiment occurred in the early days of both the French and the Russian revolutions; but when by a single accident, the centuries of human development are swept away, and the complexities of life are transformed into a simple question of exist-

ence, service and peerage are seen to be external as Piccadilly garments; the strongest man comes to the top. It is notable that on the island was only one book; that book was brought there by Crichton, and the dramatist repaid the kindness of the poet who wrote a prologue for his first play, by making this book a volume of Henley's poems.

It is clear that the play is a tragedy, not only for Crichton, but for Lady Mary—yes, perhaps for Lord Loam when the change from open air, exercise, simple food, to their opposites, brings on some horrible disease of the liver. For the very organisation of society, necessary though it be, is contrary to the natural instincts of man. You cannot have your cake and eat it too, which so many grown-up children are forever trying to accomplish. If it is pleasant to have well-heated-and-lighted houses, opportunities for learning and for pleasure, adequate police protection, so it is decidedly unpleasant to conform every day and every night to the artificial restraints of convention. There is a price for everything and that price must be paid. Crichton knew well enough that it was better for Lady Mary to live in London

than on the island, and that in London a reigning servant would be unendurable. Their natural instincts therefore had to be crucified, as natural instincts are every day and everywhere. Remember the stress laid on the word "natural" throughout the play —it is Crichton's touchstone for truth. Their parting is tragic in the extreme. All parting of lovers is tragic. And the reason why this comedy is a tragedy is not because either Crichton or Lady Mary falters at the essential moment, but because the conditions of life make their mutual happiness impossible. They may eventually attain happiness in separation, but never together. The sharp pain of the unspoken farewell may eventually become the fragrance of rosemary. But now these predestined natural lovers part, and awake from a beautiful dream to cold facts.

If we may judge by the newspaper criticism of the London revival of 1919—which of course was immensely successful, for people forget how good Barrie is till they hear him again—a slightly different ending was provided to the play. I cannot help doubting this; but if it be true, what were Barrie's

reasons? Was it a sop to vociferous democracy, or was it a result of the war, which in real life would have provided another conclusion? For during the war Crichtons certainly came to the front, in every sense of that word. Anyhow, if it were changed by the author, we may for once, permissibly doubt his wisdom. The ending in the book is perfect.

LADY MARY. Tell me one thing; you have not lost your courage?

CRICHTON. No, my lady.

(*She goes. He turns out the lights.*)

The dramatic critic, A. B. Walkley, protested in *The Times* against changing the flawless close. But either his recollection of the first performance played him false, or else Barrie omitted—as he did elsewhere—some spoken lines when he put the play into the permanent form of print. Mr. Walkley, in his review of the revival, says of Crichton: "He left you with the announcement of his intention of settling down with Tweeny in a little 'pub' in the Harrow Road. This struck the perfect note, the final word of irony." Now in the book, there is no mention of a

'pub,' nor indeed of any future plan, although of course everyone foresees the marriage of Crichton with the adoring Tweeny. Mr. Walker continues: "You didn't need to be reminded of the superman. You could do that for yourself. But now the author insists upon superfluously reminding you. The Harrow Road 'pub' has been dropped out. Crichton glares at his old island subjects, and they cower with reminiscence. He glares at the formidable Lady Brocklehurst, and she, even she, quails. Lady Mary reminds him of the past, and even a *redintegratio amoris* is hinted at. In short, the author 'hedges'—'hedges' against his own old irony, that perfect thing."

The book was printed long after the first stage success, and before the revival criticised by Mr. Walkley. Is it not possible that the revival follows the text, and that either the actors gave a false interpretation, or that the critic missed even more than the 'pub'? Let us hope so.

In 1920 a French translation of *The Admirable Crichton* was produced on the Paris stage, by the clever actor-manager, Firmin Gémier. It was put on at the Théâtre An-

toine, the most hospitable of all Parisian play-houses. The version followed the English text closely, and there, at all events, the ending was not altered, for Crichton is definitely a servant in the last act. The audience gave every sign of enthusiasm and delight, for which I am glad. Paris needs Barrie as much as America needs him. Additional humour was provided by the extraordinary discussion which arose in the foyer as to how *Crichton* should be pronounced; Creeton, Crikton, and Crishton were confidently championed, and Paris had a new subject of table-talk. According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, which gave an excellent account of the French production in its issue for 7 September 1920, the Parisians now know what a "Barrieism" is. "Sir James enriched the English language with a new phrase—'to Barrie.' A 'Barrieism' was something that could be recognised and 'to Barrie' was to do something that could hardly be otherwise described."

In the cinema version provided for American consumption, I feared that in a land which loves to hear the scream of the eagle, the play would end with the marriage of Lady

Mary and Crichton. That error was not committed; in order to explain to the spectators, always eager for sentiment, the impossibility of this union, a lady was introduced who had married her chauffeur, with disastrous results. "You see, dear friends, it simply won't do." The final scene takes us to a distant farm in America—where Crichton and Tweeny live happily forever after. This is not a bad guess at what might easily be the sequel to Mr. Barrie's play. Back to the land—for a wide western farm is the nearest approach to the conditions of an island.

The film play unfortunately suffered under the Biblical title *Male and Female*—which for that matter might be the title of nine-tenths of the motion pictures—and was also marred in the opening scenes by some gratuitous and inexcusable vulgarity. After that the play progressed extremely well; the pictures were admirable, and the story dramatically and skilfully presented. Many have felt that "a protest ought to be made" against putting Barrie on the screen. Personally, under present conditions, I rejoice that it was done, and I hope to see *Peter Pan* and other masterpieces. If we had a repertory company in

every town, with the right to produce these plays on the legitimate stage, then it would be unfortunate to present them only in pictures; but, as this drama itself teaches us, the natural instinct of healthy Americans to see good plays is thwarted by a system of theatrical monopoly; and it is better to see Barrie on the screen than not to see him at all. And it is better to see Barrie on the screen than to see almost anything else.

Apart from the profound ideas expressed in this work with such a combination of mirth and sentiment, the situations are truly dramatic from beginning to end, one more proof of how this man of letters does not depend wholly or even mainly on the written word. If you stop to think of it, there is no more dramatic figure than a butler—consider *Fanny's First Play;* consider *Dear Brutus;* consider the frequency with which the figure of a butler appears on the modern stage. He is picturesque and even startling; have you reflected on the astounding process of civilisation which has brought about such a situation as that of a man handing food three times a day to healthy and able-bodied individuals?

Lady Brocklehurst, terrible as an army with banners, an old woman who must bring joy to the heart of Hugh Walpole, probes into human nature by a method so simple it is a wonder that it is not more generally adopted. How should *I* feel? what should *I* say if I were in his position? It is the old Charles Reade formula, *Put Yourself in His Place.* We are all alike in sensations and reactions and impulses; but we differ so radically in imagination that the truth remains in darkness when it might easily be brought into the light.

Owing to the powerful impression made by this play, it is probable that in the minds of most people to-day the Admirable Crichton means Barrie's butler; perhaps it will not be an insult to readers if I recall the fact that the original person who earned the adjective was James Crichton, born in Scotland, 19 August 1560, famous for his immense learning and accomplishments. At the age of seventeen, it is said (I doubt it) that he was the master of twelve languages. Thus equipped, he traveled on the Continent, enlisted in the French army, later went to Italy, engaged in public debates, wrote clever Latin

poems, and was dexterous with the sword. He had a four days debate with the faculty of the University of Padua on the true meaning of the Aristotelian philosophy, completely vanquishing those Pundits. In Mantua he killed a famous swordsman in a duel that attracted as much attention as a modern prize-fight. Finally he was murdered in a street attack at night. He left this world with a magnificent gesture, for recognising the leader of the assassins as his pupil, he offered him his own sword handle first; the gentleman accepted it and slew him. This happened in July 1583, the Admirable Crichton being twenty-two years of age. If the half of his biography be true, Mr. Barrie's hero is not necessarily overdrawn.

The first two of the plays released for separate publication were *Quality Street* and *The Admirable Crichton*. Each appeared in a sumptuous large volume, with so many illustrations by Hugh Thomson that it is the next thing to being in the theatre. Mr. Thomson, who was born only a few days after J. M. Barrie, had an almost uncanny understanding of these dramas; the pictures are exceedingly beautiful and worthy of all

praise as interpretations. I wish the complete plays were in this form.

In the year 1904 came *Peter Pan,* and it had a *succès fou.* This is no spring flower, or hothouse plant; it is a hardy perennial, and will delight thousands of spectators after we shall have all made our exit from the planet. It is one of the most profound, original, and universal plays of our epoch. No London Christmas would be complete without it. It is just as appealing in 1920 as it was in 1914, and there is no reason why it should not produce the same effect in 2020. It is the rapture of children, the joy of old age; and it ought to take its place with *Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels, The Pied Piper Story, Alice in Wonderland,* and other classics founded on some eternal principle of youth.

At all events, in this play, Mr. Barrie created a character, a personality; Peter Pan is an addition to literature and an addition to humanity. He is a real person—already proverbial—and it seems incredible that he can ever be forgotten.

No wonder the famous author enjoyed Daisy Ashford's *Young Visiters;* the man

that wrote *Peter Pan* was the first man in the world to appreciate the character and adventures of Mr. Salteena. George Meredith said of Henry James's book, *The American Scene,* "It is really a tour of Henry James's inside." Well, the play *Peter Pan,* with all its objective pictures and thrilling climaxes, is really a tour of the inside of a child's mind. The play, supposedly written by a child, is a child's view of the world; the tick-tock crocodile, the pirate smoking cigarettes like a candelabra, the fairies and the flying are all romantically true to life. Yet it is nowhere invertebrate; it is not a series of pretty pictures, it is emphatically a play, and no one but a great dramatist could have produced it.

It is curious that there should have been any doubt as to the audience's reception of the question—*Do you believe in fairies?* Audiences will always respond to an appeal to what is best in them. This question and answer united stage and auditorium, and made every listener an integral part of the play.

As stodgy elders frequently fear that the reading of detective stories will draw boys into a career of crime, so there was one New

York winter when many feared that *Peter Pan* would cause appalling infant mortality. Nor, from any point of view, could their fears be called groundless. All the children were trying to fly, and wished to begin at the nearest window. Nurses literally had their hands full.

I said that Mr. Barrie was fortunate in having so fine an artist as Hugh Thomson to illustrate his plays. He is equally fortunate in the bronze statue of Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens. It seems almost miraculous that such a creation of air could be so beautifully expressed in a rigid form. But the bronze figure is a marvel of lightness and grace, and has given abiding pleasure to the playwright. As a rule, statues are not erected to persons until after their death. In this instance, it was hopeless to await such an event.

For that matter not merely the statue, but the Serpentine and the island have now, in addition to their historical associations, a new literary geography.

George Llewellyn Davies was the little boy who was the original of Mr. Barrie's Peter Pan. He was sick in bed when the first per-

formance of the play was given, but through the kindness of Charles Frohman the company gave a special presentation which he could see in his room. He became the adopted son of the dramatist, and was killed in battle, early in the war.

The late Joyce Kilmer (who was to share the same tragic fate) published an article on Mr. Barrie in the *New York Times* for 12 November 1916, from which we learn the origin of the name Wendy. Alice, the tiny daughter of W. E. Henley, was devoted to the poet's friend; she tried to call him "Friendly," but she actually managed only "Wendy." She died; and her pet name has become enshrined in the play.

Mr. Barrie's brain is divided into two compartments; with one he writes novels and with the other, plays. He never makes the mistake of using the wrong implements for the allotted task, an error common to literary men, and to men not at all literary. That he is himself quite aware of the distinction between these forms of art is plain from the first paragraph of *Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire* (1905). Alluding to the impossibility of revealing the secrets of Amy's diary: "Is it

because this would be a form of eavesdropping, and that we cannot be sure our hands are clean enough to turn the pages of a young girl's thoughts? It cannot be that, because the novelists do it. It is because in a play we must tell nothing that is not revealed by the spoken word; you must find out all you want to know from them; there is no weather even in plays nowadays except in melodrama; the novelist can have sixteen chapters about the hero's grandparents, but we cannot even say he had any unless he says it himself. There can be no rummaging in the past for us to show what sort of people our characters are; we are allowed only to present them as they toe the mark; then the handkerchief falls, and off they go."

Maeterlinck's *Betrothal* had not appeared when these words were written; but even so, they hold good for realistic plays.

In *Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire,* not only is every individual character laughed at, but boyhood, girlhood, youth, manhood and womanhood are all enveloped in a sea of mirth. It is a comedy of situations very close to farce; its conventional feature is the complete misunderstanding among the actors, with the audi-

ence in full possession of the truth, enjoying it all. There are times indeed when we feel the intrusion of the regular formula for producing laughter—bewilderment. Yet although it is perhaps the least important of its author's mature work, it is saved from cheapness by its revelations of human nature and by its tenderness. One expects the brother and sister to be absurd; their absurdity helps to make them irresistible; "for aye" is as delightful as "methinks" in *Sentimental Tommy;* but how about Stephen? Are full grown men so vain as that, so easily made idiotic by gross flattery? They are.

J. M. Barrie was the last of all the playwrights to obey the call of the publisher. The printing of plays, traditional on the Continent, is a recent phenomenon in England and in America; and until 1892, with a few exceptions that belonged more to literature than to the stage, they were not worth printing. But in the twentieth century, we had on our library shelves Wilde, Synge, Yeats, Pinero, Jones, Galsworthy, Barker, Shaw, Hankin, Fitch, Moody, Thomas—whilst Barrie, who could best afford to accept the challenge of type, remained obstinately inaccess-

ible. In the year of grace 1918, he consented to the publication of all his plays, but they do not come fast enough.

Now it is more necessary that English plays should be published than the works of Continental writers. For on the Continent every one is permitted to go to the theatre and see a new production; whereas in America only those who are able to be in New York are allowed this privilege. The modern drama simply does not exist in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, St. Louis, Kansas City, New Orleans, and San Francisco. If it were not for the publication of plays, American people living outside of New York would know not much more of contemporary British and American dramas than they know of the Japanese. So long as the citizens of the great centres of population away from New York are content with this situation, so long will it continue to exist.

The reason why the author hesitated to give his consent to the publication of his plays is because they were written for the theatre; as soon as one was produced, and the stress of its preparation and rehearsal over, he had had enough of it, he was done

with it; he was eager to begin a new work. Now to print it, as he conceived of the undertaking, was not merely to print the dialogue, with a list of *dramatis personæ,* and a few stage directions; he felt that it was essential to write stage directions and supplementary explanations so extensively, that the reader would be as nearly as possible in the position of the spectator in the darkened auditorium. At all events, these stage directions are among the most original and most brilliant compositions that have ever flowed from their author's pen; they are unlike any other stage directions in the history of the drama; they not only establish as intimate and fluid a relation between play and reader as exists between actor and spectator; they are, and are intended to be, centrifugal; they throw the emphasis away from the individual characters toward human nature in general, and make the reader aware of himself and of his identity with the follies, weaknesses and selfishness exhibited on the stage. Mr. Barrie is never primarily didactic; but being a Scotsman, he cannot help trying to bring some "lesson home" to his reader. *Thou art the man.* So far from this being a source of

irritation, if all sermons were as impressive and as charming as these plays, it would be quite possible to carry out Bernard Shaw's suggestion, and have admittance to the theatres free, while charging three dollars for a seat in church.

Mr. Barrie prints no list of *dramatis personæ;* just as in the theatre we become acquainted with each person as we see him, so in the text the introductions are separate and consecutive. They are permeated with that quality which is a secret of the author. Even the furniture of a room is alive. In *Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire,* "The lampshades have had ribbons added to them, and from a distance look like ladies of the ballet. The flower-pot also is in a skirt. Near the door is a large screen, such as people hide behind in the more ordinary sort of play; it will be interesting to see whether we can resist the temptation to hide some one behind it."

In *Rosalind,* we have a picture of the young Oxford man who is not only the perfect type of the English undergraduate, but with the change of a few words will represent with equal clearness the type so easily recognised at Yale, Harvard and Princeton. This

introduction is an admirable illustration of the author's powers of satire, so different in their quality from the tone of his friend Bernard Shaw. The young man, to use Browning's phrase, is "empty and fine as a swordless sheath," but he is satirised by sympathy, not by scorn. One feels sure, ten years hence, the boy will be doing a man's work in the world.

Before Mrs. Quickly has reached the door it opens to admit an impatient young man in knickerbockers and a Norfolk jacket, all aglow with raindrops. Public school (and the particular one) is written on his forehead, and almost nothing else; he has scarcely yet begun to surmise that anything else may be required. He is modest and clear-eyed, and would ring for his tub in Paradise; (reputably athletic also), with an instant smile always in reserve for the antagonist who accidentally shins him. Whatever you, as his host, ask him to do, he says he would like to awfully if you don't mind his being a priceless duffer at it; his vocabulary is scanty, and in his engaging mouth "priceless" sums up all that is to be known of good or ill in our varied existence; at a pinch it would suffice him for most of his simple wants, just as one may traverse the continent with *Combien?* His brain is quite as good as another's, but as yet he has referred scarcely anything to it. He respects

learning in the aged, but shrinks uncomfortably from it in contemporaries, as persons who have somehow failed. To him the proper way to look upon ability is as something we must all come to in the end. He has a nice taste in the arts that have come to him by the way of socks, spats, and slips, and of these he has a large and happy collection, which he laughs at jollily in public (for his sense of humour is sufficient), but in the privacy of his chamber he sometimes spreads them out like troutlet on the river's bank and has his quiet thrills of exultation. Having lately left Oxford, he is facing the world confidently with nothing to impress it except these and a scarf he won at Fives (beating Hon. Billy Minhorn). He has not yet decided whether to drop into business or diplomacy or the bar. There will be a lot of fag about this; and all unknown to him there is a grim piece of waste land waiting for him in Canada, which he will make a hash of, or it will make a man of him. (Billy will be there too.)

For sheer audacity, it would be difficult to parallel the opening of *What Every Woman Knows* (1908). The curtain rises and not a word is spoken for seven minutes. To conceive and to insist on such a situation is an indication of how much confidence the playwright had in himself, and in his audience. His confidence was justified, though it would

be foolhardy for another to imitate it. I remember hearing of one play, where the curtain rose on an empty room; a dim lamp was burning; a woman in black entered, took a seat at the table, and gave vent to a long sigh. Some one in the gallery said kindly, "Well, don't let us keep you up," and the audience went into such hysteria that the play could not go on.

In the beginning of this play, one sees that the author's silences are as impressive as his dialogue—in fact, it is dialogue, a kind of song without words. Silence is used for comedy, as Maeterlinck uses it for tragedy. The two men at the dambrod, the alternation of triumph and despair, were greeted by the audience with every indication of joyful recognition; and at the pat moment, in walks David, and removes his boots. You can hear the clock ticking, and when the silence is finally broken by David's voice, not one guess in a million would have predicted what the granite-like Scot would say — it is a quotation from Tennyson's *Maud!*

This is one of the masterpieces, in the same class with *The Admirable Crichton* and *Dear Brutus*. The construction of the piece is as

near perfection as the human mind can make it; the unexpected happens in every scene, just as it does in history. The surface caprices and quiddities of human nature are all accurately charted, and the depths of passion—love, jealousy, ambition—are revealed. If the dramatist had written only this play, we should know that he was a man of genius. No amount of toil can turn out work like this; it is sheer revelation; it is, as Turgenev wrote to Tolstoi, a gift coming from that source whence comes all things.

The scene in the third act is a scene of tremendous passion—the air is tense with it; and yet, with keen excitement, there is not even a penumbra of melodrama. It is as though the suffering were so intense and terrible that we can have no smell of the theatre in these flames; that we can have only reality, too harsh and bitter—and too infinitely tender—for any play-acting. Then we suddenly remember, after the scene is over, that it was "only a play." Just that: "only a play"—only a great work of art, only a profound revelation of the evil and of the sublimity hidden in every man and woman.

Here is a decisive battle between love and

lust—between the grace of God and the power of the world. Maggie says to her brother, "I'll save him, David, if I can." "Does he deserve to be saved after the way he has treated you?" "You stupid David. What has that to do with it?"

In the published version, two passages are omitted, both of which made a palpable hit in the theatre. I do not know why Mr. Barrie cancelled them, but it is fair to guess. The first is in the great scene in the third act: Maggie's father and two brothers pass by the self-condemned and yet defiant John Shand: every one of the three brands him with a monosyllabic epithet; I remember only the third. Let us suppose the first man hissed "Scoundrel!" the second, "Traitor!" now the third, with terrific emphasis shouted "ENGLISHMAN!" At the London performance, this word drew more delighted laughter and applause than any other speech. Is it not possible that in some ways the English have a more acute sense of humour than the Irish? This speech is one of Mr. Barrie's greatest audacities, but he knew his audience; he foresaw the result. Suppose a similar scene was presented with the Scots-

man shouting *Irishman!* He would be mobbed.

Perhaps in print the author could not be sure that the reader would hear the proper tone of the voice, nor that he would understand it. Furthermore, the play was published during the dark hours of the war, and he could not bring himself to say that word in that way, even in jest. This, anyhow, is my guess; but I am sorry for every one who did not hear the original version.

The other omission is just before the click of the final curtain. This is what happened in the theatre. "Oh, John, if I could only make you laugh at me!" "I can't laugh, and yet I think you are the drollest thing in all creation." "We're all droll to them that understand us, and I'll tell you why; Eve wasn't made out of Adam's rib; she was made out of his funnybone." Now I think the reason why he left this out is because it is not good enough; it is good enough for most dramatists; it would make the fortune of some; but it is not good enough for J. M. Barrie. In my opinion, the printed version gains by its omission.

"Oh, John, if only you could laugh at me."

"I can't laugh, Maggie."

(*But as he continues to stare at her a strange disorder appears in his face.* MAGGIE *feels that it is to be now or never.*)

"Laugh, John, laugh. Watch me; see how easy it is."

(*A terrible struggle is taking place within him. He creaks. Something that may be mirth forces a passage, at first painfully, no more joy in it than in the discoloured water from a spring that has long been dry. Soon, however, he laughs loud and long. The spring water is becoming clear.* MAGGIE *claps her hands. He is saved.*)

Never shall I forget that Monday afternoon in the spring of 1909 when Maude Adams presented this play in New Haven. She presented it in every sense of the word, making an outright gift of the gross receipts to the Yale University Dramatic Association. She hired the theatre, paid the salaries of the actors, paid for the transportation of the company and the scenery from New York and return, so that every cent taken was given to the beneficiary. The performance began at one o'clock, as the play had to fill its regular date in New York at eight. The theatre was jammed; and the special occasion put both

actors and audience on edge. There was a tenseness in the atmosphere that it is impossible to describe—the actress and her company fairly outdid themselves, and everyone in the house, from President to sweep, was melted —I remember one grey-bearded professor sitting near me, who, as the tears coursed down his whiskers, exclaimed, "I thought you said this was a comedy!" It was impossible to restrain one's emotion; and that it reacted on the stage may be surmised from the fact that in the last scene both Miss Adams and the leading man were so overcome that they could scarcely articulate. After a score of recalls, an undergraduate, representing the Dramatic Association, stepped on the stage, announced that Maude Adams had been made an honourary member, and presented a medal. She was both laughing and crying, and it seemed impossible that she could make a speech. But she did. She surprised us even as Maggie surprised John Shand at the end of the second act. With an affectionate gesture that embraced the audience she said:

My Constituents!

One reason why it is more difficult to write a play than a novel, is because in a novel you can say that your characters are witty and brilliant conversationalists, without writing any witty or brilliant conversation. On the stage you have got to prove it. What a test for Barrie to create a character like Maggie Shand! the audience must really hear her Shandisms, and they do.

I think the critic of the Literary Supplement of the *London Times* is mistaken in finding this play cruel and depressing; "we are shut up in a cage of makeshift, of a clear-sighted, tolerant despair." He finds a "clear cruelty, a strong hint of sneering." A play where a lost soul is redeemed by the laughter of love, a play where love triumphs over the forces of evil, can hardly be characterised in such terms. Tragedy is there in plenty; but a woman's wit puts it to flight.

This is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;
Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.
If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you;
Make the low nature better by your throes!

It is possible that if Ibsen had never writ-

ten *A Doll's House,* Barrie would not have written *The Twelve-Pound Look* (1910). It certainly harks back to the great Norwegian, only there is an improvement even on that master of economy, for the whole story is squeezed (as Henry James would have said) into one act. It has the depth of Ibsen without his grimness, and a marriage history is revealed in fifteen minutes. It is the tragedy of failure in success; the husband, identified by Barrie with every man in the audience, had a complacency that literally made his lawful spouse run for her life. There was not the faintest spark of an adventure about such a domestic existence —

> We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
> Starved, feasted, despaired—been happy.

Nora slammed the door, in order that the audience might hear it; and she did this at the last moment of the play. Kate slipped out quietly many years before the rise of the curtain; and her subsequent adventures, together with the slow poisoning of her successor, form a sequel to the *Doll's House.* The combination of Ibsen and Barrie (at their best) is a delight to gods and men. I

remember when I saw this play, brilliantly interpreted by Ethel Barrymore, I had that keen intellectual pleasure experienced only in the contemplation of the work of a master. Barrie was three thousand miles away; but we had the chance of watching his mental activities, as the story progressed. It was a great theme handled with absolute ease, a man rejoicing in the fullness of his powers.

A reason why Barrie wrote it in one act, is because he could not bear to have the logical sequence interrupted. I have often wished at good plays that there might be no intermissions. Who wants to leave the room at an exciting moment? These between-the-acts are as acute a nuisance as the persons who stood between the sunshine and Diogenes.

I wonder if the human mind really requires as much "rest" as seems to be commonly supposed. I am quite sure that most human minds do not require rest, for that is their normal state. What they need is development; even if the process should demand acute stimulation. Is it impossible for the average man to listen to a good play more than thirty minutes? Is it impossible to lis-

ten to Beethoven without watching the body of some female "interpreting" him?

They used to say that if Sarah Bernhardt ever grew old, it would be between the acts. Intermissions are of course often necessary, but why have them when no change of scene or of costume demands it? At the end of some plays, one's confused recollection of the evening is of a long series of varied amusements, social conversation, night air, cigarettes, and liquid refreshments—with little dabs of stagestuff interposing, even as in modern magazines the advertisements are held together by bits of "literature."

In 1913 appeared *The Legend of Leonora,* not the greatest but in some ways the most original of all its author's productions. This is one of my favourite plays, although it was coldly received by both English and American critics. To omit this comedy from Mr. Barrie's works would be a visible subtraction; it is unlike any of the others both in the humour of character and in the humour of situation. It seemed to me that the critics rather misunderstood its significance—they thought it either a meaningless and therefore irritating whimsical absurdity, or else they

regarded it as an overdone burlesque. Now it is not a satire, it is not a burlesque, and it is not meaningless. It is only apparently fantastic; fundamentally it is not fantastic at all. Instead of dramatising action and conversation, he has dramatised *motives and impulses*—which in organised society cannot possibly come to fruition.

A common speculation is the horror of embarrassment that would fall on a social gathering should every one present suddenly speak out exactly what was in his mind, and act out every wayward impulse. Think of the vagaries, the insults, the flatteries, the blows and the kisses that would fill the air! I suppose everyone who has sat in church, or at a solemn assembly, and has had the diabolical urge to shout something unspeakable, has experienced a reaction of shame somewhat akin to what one would feel had the awful thing really happened.

Now in *The Legend of Leonora,* we have two ideas presented; one, that no individual can be described by a formula; on different days in the life of the same person, that person may behave as irregularly and inconsistently as the weather. On Tuesday she may

want you to pick up her handkerchief; but who can predict that she will have the same desire on Thursday? We are constantly demanding of dramatists and novelists that they make their characters consistent, when in real life there are no such animals. Much of the enormous labour spent on the talk and deeds of Hamlet might be saved if this primary fact were borne in mind.

The second idea, on which the comedy is really founded, is the dramatisation of *impulse* instead of the representation of action. Leonora's little girl had a cold, just a snuffly cold; and when the lady requested the gentleman to close the train-window, and he rudely refused, she killed him. So far from attempting to excuse herself, or to pretend that it was an accident, she insists that she meant to kill him, and is glad she did. "Can't you understand? My little girl had a cold and the man wouldn't shut the window." It is not she who is crazy, but everyone else. Now of course a woman travelling with a sick child would not kill a man who refused to shut a window; but she would want to. The same dramatisation of motive and impulse appears in the trial scene. One

critic showed a misconception of this, saying that he thought it a poor burlesque. Of course the point is that it is not a burlesque at all. The prisoner is beautiful, centripetally attractive; the judge, the prosecuting attorney, the jury show her every attention, vying with one another in claiming her notice; when the jury retire, they soon send in a message, requesting the prisoner's company during their deliberations. Now none of these things could (I admit) happen in a court of law; the judge and prosecuting attorney would not flatter the prisoner, nor would the jury request her presence; but if the prisoner were radiantly beautiful, this is exactly what every man of them would want to do. She gladly accedes to the wish of the jury and enters their room carrying an enormous bouquet; when she returns, she has almost nothing of it left; but when the jury appear, every one of them has a flower in his buttonhole.

Human nature may be faithfully and truthfully represented in unnatural speech and in unnatural conduct, and this is what Barrie has done. Such at all events is my understanding of the play, as I give it remembering

the happy day I saw it on the stage. I eagerly await its appearance in print, whether or not my impression will be confirmed.

In *A Kiss for Cinderella* (1916) we have one of the lesser plays, but for all that a thing of beauty. Here he returns to favourite ground, representing life through the imagination of an elementary mind. The old charwoman attends the royal function, where the king and queen are sitting in rocking-chairs and eating ice-cream cones. Lord Times is even higher, as the Quiet was above Setebos. This play indicates that the tenderness in the author's heart cannot be killed by circumstances; in the scene where the charwoman is taking care of the babies, one of them happens to be German. "I couldn't help taking her!" In her poverty and in her charity is there not a rebuke both to those who had much and gave little and to those who foamed at the mouth with indiscriminate hate?

The World War naturally appears in the dramas written between 1914 and 1918. Our author has the distinction of having written the worst and the best war-play—I refer to *Der Tag* and to *The Old Lady Shows Her*

Medals. The first edition of the latter was printed complete in the *New York Times,* and gave many thousand Americans an unpleasant shock. It is the only writing by Barrie that is flat. Then it was generally agreed that in one respect Barrie was like other dramatists—he could not write a good play about the war. But he could and did, not once, but several times. In the volume called *Echoes of the War* (1918), we have four short dramas, all interesting and effective, and one overwhelmingly impressive. One of these is *The New Word,* which together with a burlesque written by Barrie for the late Gaby Deslys (!) had its first performance on the London stage in March 1915. The *Athenæum* nearly fainted from the shock. I can forgive the critic for his regret that so distinguished an author should write such a thing, but I cannot forgive him for using the past tense in his closing sentence—"All this comes from one who has, or had, the gift of getting psychological insight across the footlights." The critic really knew better than that.

And his disgust at the burlesque envenomed his review of *The New Word,* which he

called a lost opportunity; it is really most commendable in that it avoids any semblance of slushy sentiment and melodrama, at the very time when such deplorable affairs in the theatre were most in vogue. A normal English boy takes leave of a normal English father and mother, as he departs for the front; the two farewells are quite different. Father and son are both cursed with the impossibility of expressing their emotions, and the father knowing that this is the last time he may see one whom he loves more than anything else on earth, realises that it is now or never. The embarrassment of the two is both amusing and painful; but it is real; the father cannot let the boy go in ignorance of how (literally) inexpressibly his father loves him; but how to make this clear without a "scene"? The boy in discovering his father's love, must not lose respect for him.

No one could have written this little drama so well as Barrie. Once more we may remember that although the family is English, fathers and mothers are much alike in every country. It is easier to overemphasise national differences than to bear in mind the essential kinship of all men. Barrie makes

no such error. The printed play opens with these words: "Any room nowadays must be the scene, for any father and any son are the *dramatis personæ*. We could pick them up in Mayfair, in Tooting, on the Veldt, in rectories or in grocers' back parlours, and tell them to begin."

We are perhaps made aware of the fact that French fathers are more like English fathers than is commonly supposed, if we remember a scene near the beginning of Dumas' deathless romance *Les Trois Mousquetaires,* where young d'Artagnan leaves the parental roof. This might easily have served as a prototype for Barrie's play.

"En sortant de la chambre paternelle, le jeune homme trouva sa mère qui l'attendait avec la fameuse recette dont les conseils que nous venons de rapporter devaient nécessiter un assez fréquent emploi. Les adieux furent de ce côté plus longs et plus tendres qu'ils ne l'avaient été de l'autre, non pas que M. d'Artagnan n'aimât son fils, qui était sa seule progéniture, mais M. d'Artagnan était un homme, et il eût regardé comme indigne d'un homme de se laisser aller à son émotion,

tandis que madame d'Artagnan était femme et de plus était mère."

The greatest play produced by the war is *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals.* It is a tragedy, as every war-play should be. Going the rounds of the theatres and witnessing the average sentimental melodrama or propaganda-thesis inspired by the titanic struggle, one would imagine that there were no important casualties. It is like the ironical story I once read of a railway accident—"only the fireman." The hero invariably comes back in triumph, the war being the luckiest and happiest thing in his life, for it brought him advancement, fame, and love. Barrie is too honest for any sweetish illusions. Just as he takes the ordinary themes of the theatre in times of peace, and creates something permanent and beautiful, so he takes the universal theme of the war, and shows how its tragedy reaches down into the humblest lives. No Oxford or Cambridge here; we have only charwomen, who preserve social distinction with more rigidity than prevails in Mayfair. (A favourite theme with Barrie; remember Crichton below stairs. The last persons who

will ever accept democracy are the servants.) "Altogether, she is of a very different social status from one who, like Mrs. Haggerty, is a charwoman but nothing else." The entire play takes place under ground, like Gorki's *Night Asylum,* which in other respects it does not resemble! we shall see that the basement will be illuminated by Love, like that wonderful subterranean home of Tolstoi's shoemaker.

Four of them are having tea, with Mrs. Dowey as hostess. "There is no intention on their part to consider peace terms until a decisive victory has been gained in the field (Sarah Ann Dowey), until the Kaiser is put to the right-about (Emma Mickleham), and singing very small (Amelia Twymley)." Their pride in having sons at the front, in owning war savings certificates, in being bitter-enders, is precisely like that of their sisters in Park Lane. Across every title-page of Barrie's books might be written, "Human nature is always and everywhere the same."

Mrs. Dowey's conquest of her hypothetical son cannot possibly be described; only Barrie, with his insight born of divine sympathy, could have imagined it. The big, rough

"chunk of Scotland," bursting with vitality, leaves her for the front, as his time is up; we hear him in the street; "that is he laughing coarsely with Dixon. . . ." In the last scene not a word is spoken. Kenneth has been killed. The "old lady" is in her working-clothes, about to start off for her day's toil. But before going, she shows her medals.

It is, like all Barrie's plays, like the story of every human life, a tragi-comedy. The early scenes arouse inextinguishable laughter; in the last act, the ordinary relation of audience to stage is reversed. Instead of noise on the stage and silence in the auditorium, the solitary woman moved about in absolute stillness while unrestrained sobbing was heard all over the house. I could no more help crying than I could help breathing.

The heroine is a charwoman, elevated to a vertiginous height by solemn pride.

The latest play to fall within the scope of this essay (how happy I am that I cannot make it complete!) is *Dear Brutus,* which had its first regular American performance in New York, 23 December 1918, and ran until the closing of the theatre in hot weather.

The title of course is taken from the speech of Cassius in *Julius Cæsar:*

> The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
> But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

But I think the germ of the play and its main idea are to be found in *The Admirable Crichton,* in one of the stage directions of the third act: the slacker Ernest, transformed in appearance by Crichton's discipline, appears hard at work, and here is the comment by the dramatist:

> *We should say that he is* ERNEST *completely changed if we were of those who hold that people change.*

That people do not change is the law of which this drama is a brilliant illustration and like all rules it is proved by its exceptions. All the persons of the play, have, by the magical agency of Lob (see *Midsummer Night's Dream*) a second chance; and although their circumstances are different, their characters are the same. With one exception. The artist and his wife, at the close of the play, seek out a new and better existence, because they have passed through a

spiritual revolution. The fault then really is in ourselves, and Barrie is true to the Shakespearean quotation. Ninety-nine out of a hundred would be the same, even if they had their heart's desire—an opportunity to try again; but there is the hundredth man. The play is disheartening when we think of the average person; but inspiring when we think of the possibilities of human nature. The one hope of the world is not that human nature will change, for it never will. The hope lies in the possibility of controlling human instincts, in the coming of that time when man's energy, conscience, reason, and will power will control his passions, rather than being their obedient servants.

Nothing could surpass, it would seem, the skill in construction shown in this comedy. The curtain has not been up two minutes before the audience are in a fever of suspense and excitement. This is caused not by any melodramatic event, but by intense curiosity, arising out of the conversation of some ladies returning from the dining-room. Barrie possesses the power of clutching the mind of an audience in the initial moment. We simply must know what is behind all this talk.

In the American performance, the play was adequately acted by every man and woman in the cast; and the initial effect was heightened by the butler, whose part was given to one of the most capable and intelligent actors in the world, Mr. Louis Calvert. This butler is no Admirable Crichton; his petty thieving in the first act continues on a colossal scale in the second, when he is a millionaire (Barrie the true democrat). And in the third act, he slips back into servility as smoothly as an old shoe, and not by a mighty consecrated self-sacrifice, as in the former drama. Barrie will not say that one person is a contemptible sneak thief, and the other a king of finance; the second is merely a rascal on a bigger scale. Why may we not draw the same comparison between an electrocuted murderer and Napoleon Bonaparte?

The second act is in fairy land. It is like the life after death, where Barrie's philosophy has the mighty support of the Apocalypse. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Even in the gorgeous scenery

of Paradise, human nature does not change; and it does not change in the beauty of Barrie's moonlit forest.

This same second act brought in a love duet—in the key of conversation, but purely lyrical—between a father and his imaginary daughter. In the American performance, this will remain vivid in the minds of those who heard it; for the two actors were a beloved veteran of the stage, William Gillette, and a young girl, hardly more than a child, Helen Hayes, who passed from obscurity to fame in less than an hour.

It seemed incredible that the third act could be anything but an anticlimax; but there is no surer proof of Barrie's genius than his last acts, the final test of constructive power. I will go so far as to say that even in most successful plays, the last act is either a downright failure or at best a falling away. But in *Dear Brutus,* as in *The Admirable Crichton,* in *What Every Woman Knows,* and in all Barrie's plays, the last act crowns the work.

Barrie is not a self-appointed prophet; he does not assume intellectual leadership; he is neither cynic nor schoolmaster; he never

scolds; but he has done more to elevate the English stage than any other man of our time. And he has accomplished this simply by writing plays that are built on the permanent foundations of human nature, that are full of action, shining with brilliant dialogue, sparkling with wit and humour, heart-shaking with tragedy, and clean as the west wind. His is the drama of ideas, as distinguished from the drama of opinions.

Barrie's plays are the shows of this world. He gives us pictures of all humanity—our follies, our impossible and futile dreams, our sordidness, our nobility, our vanity; and he accomplishes this without a trace of venom or of scorn, without a flavour of superiority; he loves men, women, and children. But in him Love is never blind.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Although Ireland has never contributed to English Literature a poet of the first rank, to English prose in general and to the drama in particular her additions have been frequent and important. If I had to name the greatest master of English prose style, I should vote for Jonathan Swift. Think of the immense richness of English Literature between 1640 and 1892, two hundred and fifty years of daily book-making; yet in that span of time, there are only three dramas that continue to shine, and they were written by two Irishmen, Goldsmith and Sheridan. In the year 1892, British Drama came to life again, and once more by means of two Irishmen, Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde. The so-called stolid Englishmen are incurable Romantics, which may be a reason that they write such wonderful poetry; the excitable and temperamental Irish are masters of the fine weapons of comedy and satire, which require for ac-

curacy of thrust a cool head and a steady hand.

It is the same difference which is so strange and yet so obvious as that which separates English from French literature. The English are sober in politics and intoxicated by romance; the glory of their literature is poetry and the romantic drama. The French are hot-headed and fickle in politics, whereas in literature their ideal is self-restraint and reserve. They have produced an amazing number of great prose writers, for which their admirable language seems particularly designed. In poetry—well, the poets who seem to foreigners their best are not accepted at all by many Frenchmen.

In addition to the work of Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw, the present great age of English Drama has been enriched by the plays of J. M. Synge, W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, Lord Dunsany and St. John Ervine. The omissions in this list would enrage some critics, but I include only those playwrights of international reputation. In the republic of art, it is more important to be an artist than a patriot, or even a personality. Un-

questionably the greatest personality in Ireland to-day is Æ. But he is not the greatest dramatist.

In one respect Shaw is just the opposite of Hamlet. They agree that the world is out of joint; but Shaw's chief happiness comes from the thought that he was born to set it right. No one has ever had so good a time lecturing humanity. If we in the audience enjoy his wit so much, think what delight it must give him. He hears it first.

Perhaps no man of our time—except John Morley—has lived so exclusively the life of reason. Shaw is unaffected by public sentiment—we always say public sentiment, public opinion, never public reason. Reason is a private and individual affair, and has nothing to do with a crowd, a community, or a nation. Reason is a steady light. A man can look at a will o' the wisp, but he cannot read a book by it, or trust its guidance.

Perhaps it is not quite true to say that Shaw is unaffected by public sentiment for it does affect him negatively. It affords him a daily text for satire. He might say with Touchstone, "It is meat and drink to me to

see a clown; by my troth, we that have good wits have much to answer for; we shall be flouting; we cannot hold."

And as he is never turned from his course by public sentiment, so the ordinary emotions of humanity, the passion in the blood, the love of a home, the passion of patriotism, the love of war, the worship of heroes, the idealisation of ordinary life,—he breathes the pure air of reason, apart from these mists. He was not married until he was over forty, he sees only the evil side of patriotism, he hates war, he reduces Napoleon, Cæsar, and Shakespeare to ordinary dimensions, he believes that nothing that glitters is really gold. He will eat no meat; and his favorite recreation is "anything except sport."

It is impossible to believe that in normal times he does not enjoy this splendid isolation. "It is a pleasure to stand upon the shore, and to see ships tossed upon the sea; a pleasure to stand in the window of a castle, and to see a battle and the adventures thereof below; but no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of truth (where the air is always clear and serene) and to see the errors, and wanderings, and

mists, and tempests, in the vale below."

I say he enjoys this isolation *in normal times*. The life of reason being perforce as solitary as the life of asceticism—when the whole community is swept by one mighty wave of passion, as in the abnormal tidal wave of war, then there is no place at all for the individualist. The lover of literal truth must sacrifice this intellectual luxury for the other aspect of truth, which is Loyalty. A man can be true to facts, and untrue to a cause or to a person.

> What so false as truth is,
> False to thee?

As millions sacrifice their homes, their property, their comforts, their limbs and their lives, so the few whose dearest possession is the love of truth, find that they must sacrifice that. This is one—and not the least—of the innumerable evils of war. People suffer in their hearts, but also in their minds. Some cannot understand this latter pain, because they have no mind. In the World War, as we stand in the presence of those who have lost their health and activity, and of those who have lost members of their family, we can say

nothing; we can only silently uncover and salute. But there is another tragedy—the tragedy of the crucified Mind, which few understand. I think very few comprehend what agony and torture men like John Morley and Bernard Shaw suffered every day during the years from 1914 to 1918. They had spent their lives in the pleasant glow of reason; now there was darkness everywhere.

> O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts,
> And men have lost their reason!

In the case of Shaw, his nemesis was the nemesis of every honest man who has nevertheless minimised the virtues of loyalty and coöperation. These too, are real virtues, almost the only ones in times of universal peril. The lonely philosopher may not fear the scorn of the crowd; but he must fear his solitude, as he eats out his own heart. And his serenity must be clouded by the doubt as to whether after all his way is the only way.

If any one believes that I have pictured Shaw's tragedy too sombrely, I suggest that he read the preface to *Heartbreak House.* That book was treated harshly in almost every review of it; there is no harshness like

the brutality that cannot understand. With the exception of a few sentences—Shaw's genius was ever greater than his taste—the preface should be read with sympathy, if not with reverence; for it is the confession of a pilgrim and a stranger in this world.

Shaw has spent his life trying to make people listen to him—he became a dramatist partly by accident, and only after he had tried other forms of address. He used the drama, as the Elizabethans used it, because in 1600 and in 1900 drama was the highest form of expression, the best channel of ideas. Like Barrie and Galsworthy, he had been a novelist—in the eighties he wrote novels so brilliant that it seems amazing that they attracted no attention. When William Archer, who has introduced so many good things to the British public, sent Stevenson a copy of *Cashel Byron's Profession,* Stevenson went into a delirium of rapture. "If he has written any other, I beg you will let me see it." In a subsequent letter, "Tell Shaw to hurry up: I want another."

Shaw's early plays attracted no general attention, and from 1895 to 1898 he was Dramatic Critic for the *Saturday Review.* Fortu-

nately his criticisms were subsequently (1906) published in two thick volumes, under the heading *Dramatic Opinions and Essays.* He has also written much criticism of music, and his modernity was established by his continual efforts in behalf of those two mighty men, Wagner and Ibsen.

It was not until the year 1898 that he became famous, the cause of his fame being the publication of two volumes of *Unpleasant and Pleasant Plays.* For years after that date he was regarded as more dramatist than playwright, and more literary than either. Apart from the intrinsic worth of his productions, he owes his success on the stage more to Granville Barker than to any other man. At first he would have none of the efforts of Barker, saying that it was impossible that a man with such a name could have any intelligent comprehension of his work. But Shaw has an enormous respect for pounds, shillings, and pence; no business man among the despised Philistines can drive a better bargain, or is more tenacious of his "rights." Barker convinced Shaw by the thing that is said to talk.

No wonder we learn to despise public opin-

ion when we find over and over again, that in matters of art, at all events, it is so often not only incorrect, but the exact opposite of the truth. "Browning is a philosopher, but no poet," and there is no poetry more beautiful. "Wagner is ingenious, but cannot write melodiously," and his operas are worth all the other operas in the world put together. "Ibsen is a grim and morbid pessimist, but no dramatist," and his plays delight audiences in all the capitals of Europe. "Shaw is a literary satirist and iconoclast, but no playwright"—how absurd that sounds, when I recall the thrilling nights at the theatre listening to *Androcles and the Lion, The Doctor's Dilemma, You Never Can Tell, Fanny's First Play, Major Barbara, Man and Superman, Pygmalion, Cæsar and Cleopatra,* and many others. Instead of being "no playwright," he is one of the greatest in the history of the stage. The man who wrote the second act of *Major Barbara* has an absolute genius for drama.

In the days of his obscurity, he was always debating. At radical meetings he mounted the platform on every possible occasion, and even now, when his real audience is under

the solitary lamp, his chief recreation, his form of bodily exercise is public speaking. These who were young and now are old testify to the power of his rhetoric, and remember the inspiration; but I am glad he became a writer of books. For although we live in the golden age of English Drama, the English Theatre is in such a condition that a thousand must read Bernard Shaw for one who can hear him.

St. John Ervine and Henry Nevinson assert that they have learned more from and therefore owe more to Bernard Shaw than to any modern man. They regard him as the boldest, most courageous, and most germinal thinker of our time. Yet thousands look upon him as merely a public entertainer, indeed as a clown. When all is said, he has more admirers than disciples; but it is curious that one of the stock subjects for discussion all over the world is whether or not Bernard Shaw should be taken seriously. This is of course partly his own fault, as such a confusion necessarily must be; his ardent admirers insist that Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were not more serious or earnest than he.

I do not know which would annoy him more —to be taken for a jester, or to be literally followed. To take a man of genius as an amusement is certainly unfortunate for the crowd; but on the other hand, it is worth while to remember the words of Oscar Wilde: "In a temple everyone should be serious except the thing worshipped."

As to whether he should be taken seriously or not, there can be only one true answer. Art is always to be taken seriously. Whether Bernard Shaw is a prophet or not, in literature he is a star of the first magnitude. Although minor poets do not like it, there is only one road to eminence in literature, and that is by good writing. The reason why everybody who reads anything reads Bernard Shaw is because he is a literary genius, who adorns with his art every subject that he touches. It does not make any difference whether he talks about this or that, he captures the interest of the reader every time. The real subject of all his remarks is Bernard Shaw—and we read him for the same reason that students elect courses in college, not because of the subject, but because of the man who teaches it. Now there

are so many dull people in the world, and such a countless number of dull books, that when an author appears who is certain to interest the reader every time, we repay him not only with intellectual homage, but with hearty affection. He may irritate us, he may shock us so that we say this is the last time he will have the opportunity; but in our heart of hearts, we know that we shall read his next book. The fact is that we cannot live without our literary artists; we always place them above men of science and men of adventure, because we know that they are necessary to brighten the monotony of our lives. The man of science saves you from death; the man of letters saves you from life.

To many Shaw seems like a nuisance; but there is only one kind of critic who is really a nuisance. That is the man who thinks he is filled with righteous indignation, when in reality he is only peevish; who, instead of being pertinent, is petulant; who is in short a common scold. Shaw has never descended to that level. He is a nuisance as Conscience is a nuisance.

While Shaw is awake, the world will never go to sleep. A gadfly is a torment, but if one

were sinking in a stupour in a snowdrift, then an active gadfly would be a blessing. Every institution, every organisation, and every person need intelligent opposition. The true teacher needs pupils who are more thoughtful than docile; obedience is not the prime virtue, even in school. The minister would profit if there were men in every congregation who questioned everything he said, and told him so. Without intellectual resistance the teacher and the preacher grow unctuous, flabby, intolerable. Every powerful political party needs a resourceful, active, relentless opposition. Many of the most valuable contributions to the Christian Church have been made by those who were determined to destroy it. God needs the Devil.

Yet those who believe in the infallibility of the Pope and those who find apparent contradictions no insurmountable obstacle to faith, need never surrender to Shaw. The famous remark applied to so many individuals is particularly applicable here. The Pope is not so sure of anything as Shaw is of everything. And what shall we say of the consistency of a thinker who is at the same time the most extreme individualist in the world and the

strongest Socialist? It is like trying to have Liberty and Equality at the same time. You had better make up your mind which you prefer, or you will get neither. You cannot have both.

G. K. Chesterton made a most happy comparison, when he compared Shaw's philosophy with coffee. "I have often been haunted with a fancy that the creeds of men might be paralleled and represented in their beverages. Wine might stand for genuine Catholicism and ale for genuine Protestantism; for these at least are real religions with comfort and strength in them. Clean, cold Agnosticism would be clean, cold water—an excellent thing if you can get it. Most modern ethical and idealistic movements might be well represented by soda water, which is a fuss about nothing. Mr. Bernard Shaw's philosophy is exactly like black coffee—it awakens, but it does not really inspire. Modern hygienic materialism is very like cocoa; it would be impossible to express one's contempt for it in stronger terms than that."

There is only one word I should like to change in Mr. Chesterton's liquid language; I should like to substitute the word "nour-

ish" for the word "inspire." Black coffee really does inspire, and so does Bernard Shaw; but they give no nourishment. Yet after all the characterisation was true, for Mr. Chesterton was of course thinking of English coffee.

Goethe said that whenever he opened Kant's Kritik of Pure Reason, he felt as if he had stepped into a brilliantly-lighted room. With less genius on the part of reader and writer, that expresses the immediate effect of almost any of Shaw's books.

Just as it makes no difference to the party man what principles appear in the platform or what candidate attempts to stand upon it, for he will support the regular ticket anyhow, so your extreme individualist may always be found on the Opposition bench. Bernard Shaw is by nature an individualist, a free lance, a rebel; a destructive critic; "I don't know who the new Minister of Public Instruction is," said the Frenchman, "but I'm tired of him."

The individualist has no responsibility, and is naturally more radical than those in power. There are so many more things in the world that we don't want than there are that we

can't get, that the radicals, like the poor, will be always with us. A person who could not see in an hour's walk in any modern city a hundred things that ought to be changed, would be a dull observer. Society is as full of faults as a porcupine is of quills, and they are quite as obvious. Thus it is comparatively easy to attack, either with the bludgeon of denunciation or the rapier of satire; difficulties begin when a substitute plan that will work, is called for.

Who is it who said that so soon as an advocate of anything wins a disciple, his own faith is weakened? Shaw is certainly an honest and an able man. Suppose he were made Lord Dictator of the British Empire, with absolute power, would the Millennium dawn? Should we really be much better off? I do not know what his plans are; but I think it would sober him considerably if they were adopted.

It cannot be said that we need men like Shaw, for there never was anyone like him, nor will there ever be; in the history of literature, he is an original and a unique figure. But we need him. We need him as Athens needed Socrates; as the Mediæval Church

needed Luther; as England needed Cromwell; as France needed the Revolution; as George III needed George Washington.

What we want is usually quite different from what we need.

Shaw's pages bristle with ideas; and every living idea is a challenge. This is why his plays are so much more interesting than most plays. They answer no questions, but they ask many. For some in the audience the end of his play is the beginning of mental activity. Instead of giving us food, he gives us an appetite.

Bernard Shaw in one respect is the exact opposite of Shakespeare, and in this particular his dramas are the opposite of true drama. Shakespeare has presented every aspect of human life, and we do not know whether he was a Christian or an atheist, an aristocrat or a democrat, an optimist or a pessimist. His plays reach the goal of objective art—there is no alloy of the author in any of the characters, as there is in *The Ring and the Book*. Now Shaw is wholly subjective; even if he had not written the brilliant Prefaces, every play and every person represent the author. That he did write the Prefaces is a

proof of his aim; so far from concealing himself, he uses every means to reveal himself.

He is a great Teacher; and if you ask me, What does he teach? I confess I do not know. The main business of the teacher is not to impart information, to transfer facts from his skull to the skulls of the pupils with as little friction as possible. The business of the Teacher is to raise a thirst. Shaw's method, like the method of many great teachers, is the Paradox. Now a paradox, taken literally, may be absurd; but it usually contains some important truth. Paradox is over-emphasis, and every teacher knows the value of emphasis. A curious thing about the teaching of paradoxes is this; what seems paradoxical to the generation to whom it is delivered, may seem reasonably true in later centuries. "This was some time a paradox, but now the time gives it proof."

The paradox method of teaching was the method employed by Socrates, by Thomas Carlyle, by Ibsen, by Nietzsche, by Browning; and by the greatest Teacher in all history.

Truth is many-sided, and all sides need emphasis. The main thing in drama is emphasis. The late Paul Armstrong told me

once in his own peculiar accents, "The American audience has got just a quarter of an inch exposed between the hair and the eyes, see? The business of the dramatist is to hit that mark with a wedge, see?" I saw.

Although Bernard Shaw is an original writer, if there ever were one, he has learned much and been greatly influenced by his predecessors. That he has been profoundly affected by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Ibsen would be perfectly clear even if he had not denied it; his debt to Samuel Butler he takes pleasure in acknowledging. In the Preface to *Major Barbara,* he says, "The late Samuel Butler, in his own department the greatest English writer of the latter half of the XIX century, steadily inculcated the necessity and morality of a conscientious Laodiceanism in religion and of an earnest and constant sense of the importance of money. It drives one almost to despair of English literature when one sees so extraordinary a study of English life as Butler's posthumous *Way of All Flesh* making so little impression that when, some years later, I produce plays in which Butler's extraordinarily fresh, free and future-piercing sugges-

tions have an obvious share, I am met with nothing but vague cacklings about Ibsen and Nietzsche, and am only too thankful that they are not about Alfred de Musset and Georges Sand. Really, the English do not deserve to have great men. They allowed Butler to die practically unknown, whilst I, a comparatively insignificant Irish journalist, was leading them by the nose into an advertisement of me which has made my own life a burden." He carries the burden with exceeding ease; and perhaps one reason why the English allowed Butler to die practically unknown was because he would not allow his masterpieces to be published while he was alive.

Although Rousseau and Shaw are about as different as two men could be, Rousseau's weapon being Sentiment and Shaw's Reason, still the latter shares the fate of all modern artists, thinkers, and writers in being influenced by Jean-Jacques, who was not only the greatest Force but the greatest Source in modern times. Nothing could indicate more clearly that the mass of men are swayed by emotion rather than by thought, than the absolutely universal influence of that eighteenth-century Frenchman. I had not sup-

posed that it would be possible to point out any specific indebtedness, however, until I happened to see in *The Athenæum* some years ago, the suggestion that Shaw took the hint for *Pygmalion* from Rousseau. A correspondent contributed the following:

> While German critics, seeking for *Quellen,* have been attempting to trace affinities between Mr. Shaw's *Pygmalion* and a play of Smollett, a far more obvious source of inspiration has been overlooked. Rousseau's little "scène lyrique," *Pygmalion,* contains these lines (Pygmalion is speaking):
>
> "Je me suis trompé: j'ai voulu vous faire nymphe, et je vous ai faite déesse."
>
> "Il te manque une âme: ta figure ne peut s'en passer."
>
> "Pygmalion, ne fais plus des dieux, tu n'es qu'un vulgaire artiste."

Dryden's Prefaces are far better than his Plays; indeed the filth and stupidity of his comedies do not counter-balance the splendid gift of their introductions. I once heard Mark Twain present a speaker to an audience, in the most graceful, witty, and brilliant fashion—and the speaker could not say a word, but stared at the people in dumb stage-fright. It would be agreeable if Dryden's

prefaces had been written for blank-books. Now I will not say that Shaw's prefaces are always better than his plays; but he has spent to advantage as much time on the art of prefatory writing as on the art of the drama.

His prefaces are not always better than his plays, but they are sometimes. If it be true that no normal woman ever reads a preface, what would she think of *Heartbreak House*? Imagine, if you can, an intelligent woman, who finally decides that she must read something by Shaw, merely in self-defense. She takes up the volume, *Heartbreak House*, and skips the preface. What does she find? She finds a dull, incomprehensible play called *Heartbreak House* that fills one hundred and twenty-two pages; it has all the apparent formlessness of Chekhov without any of his illuminating genius; and it is followed by five playlets, only one of which, *O'Flaherty V. C.* is worthy of the author. That is a sparkling jewel, almost lost in a dustheap. Her puzzle, after vainly trying to comprehend why the book was published, would be to account for the international reputation of G. B. S.[1]

[1] However, in the autumn of 1920, the Theatre Guild in New York successfully produced *Heartbreak House*.

But the preface is one of the most profound, original, and to the sympathetic mind, heart-breaking essays that can be discovered in modern literature. It should remain as a revelation of the mind of a philosopher in time of war.

The preface to *Androcles and the Lion* is a contribution to literature, to religion, to political economy, to sociology, to New Testament interpretation. One need not agree with it to learn from it. And it is inspiring to see our iconoclast standing in reverence before the King of Kings.

Although Bernard Shaw ridicules both human conceit and most dogmas, no writer —even in this age of self-trumpeting—is more egotistical or more dogmatic. This never offends most lovers of his works, and it remained for G. K. Chesterton to give the reason. In the New York *Sun* for 1 September 1918, Mr. Chesterton, with his accustomed combination of wit and grandeur, says: "I revolt, not against the loud egotist, but the gentle egotist; who talks tenderly of trifles; who says 'A sunbeam gilds the amber of my cigarette-holder: I find I cannot live without a cigarette-holder.' I resist this ar-

rogance simply because it is more arrogant. For even so complete a fool cannot really suppose we are interested in his cigarette-holder; and therefore must suppose that we are interested in him. But I defend a dogmatic egotist precisely because he deals in dogmas. The Apostles Creed is not regarded as a pose of foppish vanity; yet the word 'I' comes before even the word 'God.' The believer comes first; but he is soon dwarfed by his beliefs, swallowed in the creative whirlwind and the trumpets of the resurrection."

It is a significant fact that a dramatist does not have to be successful at the box-office in order to exert a powerful influence on the modern stage. Many honest folk sincerely believe that a play, in order to be called a play at all, must be written primarily for the box-office, but fortunately for the cause of art, such a belief is not justified in the world of fact any more than in the moral world. Nearly all the plays of Hauptmann have been "failures"; even in his own land he is not presented nearly so often as some of his contemporaries; but his influence on the art of the theatre, on play-writing, has been and is

wide and deep. Ibsen is seen on the stage seldom in France, England, and America; but every modern playwright, except Rostand, has been affected by Ibsen. On the other hand an astonishingly successful dramatist, like Somerset Maugham, for example, has had no influence at all; modern dramatic history would be the same if he had never written a play. In art it is always quality, not quantity, that counts.

Bernard Shaw is a living force in the modern German drama of ideas, not because he is seen on the stage in Germany, though fortunately his plays frequently do appear there, but because the leaders of modern German drama study him with zeal. I wish I knew the exact relation between Shaw's *Cæsar and Cleopatra* and Hermann Bahr's *Josephine*. Hermann Bahr is one of the most distinguished writers now living. His comedy *Das Konzert* is one of the great comedies of the present era, although those who saw it transformed and deformed in the American version might not think so. The play *Josephine* is magnificent when properly acted; I saw a thrilling performance in Munich. Now the treatment of Napoleon both in the drama

itself, and in the philosophical introduction, certainly calls to mind Shaw's treatment of Cæsar and to a less extent the treatment of Napoleon in *The Man of Destiny.* This latter play was written in 1895, rejected by Richard Mansfield (for whom it was written) in 1897, and first published in 1898—it was not acted in Germany until 1904. The same year, 1898, which saw the publication of *The Man of Destiny,* was made memorable by the composition of *Cæsar and Cleopatra,* and the production of *Josephine* in Germany. In 1900 *Cæsar and Cleopatra* was published. Apparently *Josephine* was written just prior to the composition of *Cæsar and Cleopatra* and to the publication of *The Man of Destiny.* Yet it seems as though there must be some vital relation between the German and the English plays. Archibald Henderson, in his monumental *Life of Shaw,* perhaps the most completely documented biography ever produced of a living man, contents himself with saying, "The German Shaw, Hermann Bahr, has paralleled, if not followed," etc. But that is exactly what I should like to know; did he parallel or did he follow him? We know that Bahr has an immense admiration

for the Irish dramatist; he says a Shaw *première* is as great an event in Berlin as a Hauptmann *première*; he has written acute criticisms of Shaw's plays; which were published too late to throw any light on the question of influence.

One remark by Bahr should be remembered by every one who reads *The Devil's Disciple;* we know how angry the author was when the actor put in love-business, in order to ascribe a motive for the sacrifice, possibly because he thought the audience would not understand it otherwise, possibly because he could not understand it himself; the whole point was that the hero did not himself know why he behaved in such a manner. Bahr is speaking only generally, but the statement applies particularly to this play: "This very uncertainty in the elements of our primitive feelings, Shaw expresses with a mad, malicious joy. Indeed, one might say, first and foremost, that Shaw is the poet of our uncertainty."

It is significant of public taste that Shaw's success from the financial point of view dates from 1905 in America, and 1911 in England, and in each instance from one of the least important of his works. It was not until

Arnold Daly put on *You Never Can Tell* in New York that the theatre-going public were converted in America, and not until Granville Barker produced *Fanny's First Play*—which ran two years—that London audiences discovered the author's powers of entertainment. Yet Richard Mansfield, Forbes Robertson, and Ellen Terry had all appeared in plays by Shaw.

The typical British attitude toward Bernard Shaw—even that of dramatic critics—is curiously illustrated by the English correspondent of the New York *Sun,* in a two-column article published 24 May 1908, under the heading *Shaw Puzzles the Critics.* "The greatest dramatist and the greatest conversationalist in England each treated the public to a new play this week. The dramatist disappointed one audience and his critics, and the conversationalist alternately perplexed and enraged the other, which is probably just what he intended to do. A play from the pen of that master of stagecraft Pinero and a series of brilliant ideas and epigrams from that mental gymnast Bernard Shaw make an eventful dramatic week, even though both

efforts fell far below the standard hoped for by the followers of their originators."

These are strange pronouncements. Pinero was not the "greatest dramatist" because Barrie, Shaw, and Galsworthy are greater; and the play that "fell far below" was *The Thunderbolt,* which is perhaps Pinero's masterpiece, or at all events one of the best three among his numerous works. That the critics were puzzled by *Getting Married* is, however, quite true. After Shaw had read the fulminations, he remarked, "The whole explanation of their criticism is this. They were unanimous in liking the first act best, the second act much less and the third act not at all. They want to know what I mean by the third act. Well, the first act is farcical comedy, which they understand and like, the second act is sociological comedy, which they do not understand or like, and the third act is dramatic poetry, which is simply Chinese to them."

It will be remembered that in 1916 William Faversham presented *Getting Married* in New York, and that it was fairly successful.

Even if Shaw were not a genius in litera-

ture and drama, which he assuredly is, he could not have failed to attract some attention merely by the size of the forces he attacks. He is like a man on a crowded pavement, who is the only person in the throng "going his way." The mere friction of his advance would draw universal attention, and arouse irritation from all against whom he rubbed. He has decided to fight the ordinary view of religion, the ordinary view of the state; what is more the universal love of romance. In the year 1898, in the Preface to the *Four Pleasant Plays,* he wrote, "my conception of romance as the great heresy to be rooted out from art and life—as the root of modern pessimism and the bane of modern self-respect." "Idealism, which is only a flattering name for romance in politics and morals, is as obnoxious to me as romance in ethics or religion."

It is easier to understand, after reading that Preface, why it is, with all his skill as a playwright and all his brilliancy in dialogue, that those of us who delight in seeing his plays presented have still for the most part to depend on freak theatres and repertory companies. The ordinary theatre-goer is

ready to surrender to the atmosphere of romance; and what he gets is a cold douche. Shaw's plays are cleanly, antiseptic, stimulating; his laughter clears the air. But plays that substitute the laughter of reason for the warm glow of romance lack something that is generally believed to be essential; instead of having an emotional interest, they have the keen play of dialectic. It is the same with his characters; even his greatest single character, *Candida,* has no charm; there is in all his plays only one figure that has any charm, and that is the Lion. The beast is irresistible; everybody in the audience wants to stroke him.

It would be enormously interesting if Shakespeare in his plays had told us about his contemporaries, about currents of Elizabethan thought, and had expressed his opinions; but he invariably chose to be universal rather than local. This is why in the year 1920 he is more contemporary than the morning paper, because while he is never personal, he is always true. Shaw complains of Shakespeare's silences, but Shakespeare chose to deal with human life rather than with human opinions. I fervently hope that

Shaw's plays will last; that in a century from now, they will appear on the stage more frequently than they do to-day; but if not, it will be because of their modernity. The very reason for their interest and applicability may be the reason for their remaining on the shelves. Already Ibsen's *Doll's House* is beginning to seem more old-fashioned than Ibsen's *Pretenders*.

But if they cease to attract audiences, it is incredible that they should cease to attract readers. Students of social history will be compelled to study them, and those who love the pure art of literature will not be able to leave them alone.

JOHN GALSWORTHY

The speed with which John Galsworthy climbed from the vale of obscurity to the heights of fame is more than a tribute to his ability; it is a proof that popular taste is better than those who form it seem to think. His novels and his plays have no tricks; the deserts of his tragedies have no springs of laughter; even on the stage he usually appeals more to reason than to sentiment; his vitality is the vitality of the mind rather than of the passions; he seems to think that the drama is an art, not a trade.

Nor was his reputation made by one novel, or one play, or one lucky hit. It was made by a rapid succession of masterpieces. A lifetime of arduous endeavour would seem too short for what he accomplished in eight years. From 1906 to 1914 he produced the following works. Novels: *The Man of Property, The Country House, Fraternity, The Patrician, The Dark Flower.* Plays: *The Silver Box,*

Strife, Justice, The Eldest Son, The Pigeon, The Fugitive. During these eight years he found time to write and produce other books not so notable, and during the war—though actively engaged in helping—he produced three novels, some essays and verses, and has now (1920) published three new plays, and a full length novel. Though his books naturally vary in value, he has never printed anything negligible.

Our three foremost living English-writing dramatists represent, curiously enough, England, Scotland, Ireland. Shaw is an Irishman: Barrie is a Scot; Galsworthy is an Englishman.

John Galsworthy is purely English in birth, breeding, and education. He was born in Surrey, and passed through the typical preliminaries leading to the career of English gentleman. He spent five years at Harrow, and three years at New College, Oxford. In his undergraduate days he gave little indication of the intense seriousness that was later to be his main characteristic; he was indeed simply a good fellow, enjoying the usual things, and might have been an original for Barrie's portrait of the Oxford man in

Rosalind. After graduation he entered the profession of law, the common refuge of those who do not know what they want. He said of this, "I read in various chambers, practised almost not at all, and disliked my profession thoroughly."

Then he traveled extensively, visiting many remote places. His voyages seem to have had this interesting effect. Instead of giving him "material" for subsequent novels and dramas, they made him see England more sharply and clearly. The material is in his own mind. Hardly any famous writer has traveled so much and said so little about it. Practically all his themes are English; he writes of English town and country life, and almost wholly of English people. Far away from home, in a totally different environment, he saw England as Ibsen saw Norway from sunlit Italy. Many hours must have been spent in meditation about the distant island, and in comparisons of home with foreign life. He became a citizen of the world; wholly English in ancestry, boyhood environment, and education, he was able to look at things-taken-for-granted with the eyes, let us say, of some highly educated cosmopolitan Russian. This

partly accounts for the extraordinary insularity of his subjects, and for the even more extraordinary impartiality with which they are presented. He really possesses the power, prayed for by Burns, of seeing himself as others see him.

Although his rise from obscurity to fame was rapid, he spent sixteen years—from the age of twenty-three to the age of thirty-nine—in more or less unconscious preparation for his career. He became a lawyer in 1890, used up much time in travel, reflection and reading, and his first play appeared in 1906. He had then, however, been writing for eight years, trying his hand at novels and short stories. In 1904 he produced a work of fiction that he called, prophetically, *The Island Pharisees*. This would do well enough as a title for his complete works, as the general effect of his writing is plainly that of an indictment. This note of satire and denunciation is naturally stronger in the earlier novels and plays than in the later ones; age mellows us all, if we do any thinking and learn anything, and whilst Mr. Galsworthy still hates hypocrisy and self-righteousness, he hates strife even more. He has discovered that the

active force of love is more efficient than the bludgeon of scorn—a truth that was taught some nineteen centuries ago.

John Galsworthy is an aristocrat in blood and in intellect. But unfortunately for his peace of mind, he has an annoyingly importunate conscience. It is just the opposite of the robust conscience advocated by Hilda Wangel; it will not let him rest. He is not a Socialist, but his sympathy with the poor is so strong that he cannot enjoy himself. There are many people living in poverty who think it an outrage that they should suffer from the lack of necessities when so many have a superfluity of luxuries; but John Galsworthy, while it is impossible that he should share their condition, actually shares their rage. When he wakes up in the morning in pleasant surroundings and sits down to an excellent breakfast, his pleasure in it is poisoned by the fact that so many persons of equally estimable character are condemned to hardship. This is the kind of thing that ultimately drove Tolstoi into madness; but Mr. Galsworthy will be saved from extremes by his inheritance of English common sense.

To be a penniless communist is mentally

comfortable, as it is to be a radical without any responsibility; to be a selfish plutocrat is both physically and mentally comfortable; but to be an unselfish aristocrat with burning sympathy for the "lower classes" and yet to realise one's impotence to change social conditions, is not to have an ideally happy state of mind. When those two champions, Theory and Practice, engage in a daily duel on the stage of one's brain, the result is tragedy. And it is real tragedy, because it is an intolerable situation from which there is no way out. It ought not to continue, yet it can neither cease nor change.

During the war, when we all knew that many persons in Europe were starving and babies dying for the lack of milk, it seemed abominable to many American women to consider thoughtfully what they should select from the grocer for the household dinner; but what was to be done? Go without eating because others were forced to do so? Eat with such remorse as to ensure indigestion? Become hardhearted and eventually callous?

These divagations may seem absurdly far from the consideration of the plays of John Galsworthy; but I think that it is out of such

interior conflicts that the plays have come into being. It is seldom indeed that one finds a writer whose artistic conscience and whose moral conscience are both so highly developed.

A sentence in the novel *Beyond* might apply to the author of it. "He had, in these last three years, become unconsciously inimical to his own class and their imitators, and more than ever friendly to the poor—visiting the labourers, small farmers, and small tradesmen, doing them little turns when he could, giving their children sixpence, and so forth." How the late Samuel Butler would have despised such an attitude! But fortunately few of the children of men resemble that iconoclast.

Whatever may be the ultimate solution of social problems like poverty, prostitution, city slums, and inequality before the law, poets, novelists, and dramatists are determined that we shall not forget them. Our creative artists are often the conscience of the public. "You may not be able to settle these questions," they say to us; "but you shall not dismiss them from your mind. We shall convict you of sin, if we can; we shall

rob you of your complacency; you shall share with us the mental torment and distress from which our novels and dramas are born." In all of Mr. Galsworthy's plays, as Mr. Eaton said of *Justice,* the Audience is the Villain. The unpardonable sin is indifference.

His first play, *The Silver Box,* which, like so many plays in dramatic history, is named from an inanimate object, itself a shining symbol, arrays class against class in a manner prophetic of its author's subsequent work. Since the first night of Sudermann's *Die Ehre, Vorderhaus* and *Hinterhaus* have frequently been the theme of conflict, with the former represented as predatory; it is so here. The first line in the list of *Dramatis Personæ,* is ironical—*John Barthwick, M.P., a wealthy Liberal.* Despite his liberal views, he and his family are really predatory in the community; for they do not hesitate to destroy a weaker family that gets in their way. The son-and-heir from Oxford is in the very first scene coupled with an out-of-work scoundrel named Jones; they are both drunk. Young Barthwick in his revels has stolen a purse of money from a woman, and Jones in alcoholic excitement, steals the silver cig-

arette box from Barthwick. In the last act —which has an admirable trial scene, the young patrician goes free, while Jones is condemned.

MAGISTRATE. This is your first offence, and I am going to give you a light sentence. [*Speaking sharply, but without expression.*] One month with hard labour.

[*He bends, and parleys with his* CLERK. *The* BALD CONSTABLE *and another help* JONES *from the dock.*]

JONES. [*Stopping and twisting round.*] Call this justice? What about 'im? 'E got drunk! 'E took the purse—'e took the purse but [*in a muffled shout*] 'it's *'is money* got *'im* off—*Justice!*

[*The prisoner's door is shut on* JONES, *and from the seedy-looking men and women comes a hoarse and whispering groan.*]

MAGISTRATE. We will now adjourn for lunch! [*He rises from his seat.*]

[*The Court is in a stir.* ROPER *gets up and speaks to the reporter.* JACK, *throwing up his head, walks with a swagger to the corridor;* BARTHWICK *follows.*]

MRS. JONES. [*Turning to him with a humble gesture.*] Oh! Sir!—

[BARTHWICK *hesitates, then yielding to his nerves, he makes a shame-faced gesture of re-*

fusal, and hurries out of Court. MRS. JONES *stands looking after him.*]

The curtain falls.

Although this is its author's first play, it is a finished masterpiece, with no sign of weakness, no touch of crudity. It sets class against class with no melodrama, no violence, no sentimentality, no exaggeration. You will not find the hard and cruel rich man, the honest and deserving poor man, the utterly base son of the house, the corrupt and vindictive Judge. On the contrary. The rich father means well, but, like many politicians, lacks intelligence, imagination, and courage; Jones is after all a drunken, lazy brute, who beats his wife; the son-and-heir is typical of gilded youth, easy-going, and not malevolent, an amiable zero; the Judge with the evidence before him, is scrupulously fair. Yet horrible injustice is committed, and our blood boils in futile rage.

In the end the one who suffers most is morally and socially the finest character in the play—Mrs. Jones. By "socially" I mean of course her value to society. She is a good woman who wishes to bring up her children properly, and who is willing to work every

day to that end; she claims no privileges and asks no favours. She and her helpless children are left to starve.

(Personally I think the spineless Liberal Member of Parliament will hope to assist her; it will not be the first time that the cheque-book tries to atone for sin. But can he find her? She and her children have been evicted, and with the husband and father in prison, they are on the street.)

The dramatist is indeed the Judge, and the criminal is Society. The impartiality of the playwright is all the more remarkable, when we know how he really feels about it. The scenes and the dialogue are magnificent in their reserve, characteristic of the author at his best. Every one who has seen or read anything by Galsworthy feels this quality; it is one of his contributions to modern drama. He is as far from the paradoxes of Shaw and Wilde as he is from the cheapness of the typical sentimental writer. Galsworthy's plays are solid and honest, with no ornamentation, and no claptrap. He aims directly at the intelligence of the spectators, a faint and difficult target.

Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn, who has some ad-

mirable pages on Galsworthy in his valuable book, *The Modern Drama,* need not have made an exception of *The Silver Box.* "In this play only, however, is the wrong wholly on one side." Surely Jones is an abomination and we should all rejoice at his incarceration could his wife escape injury, and the young gentleman suffer equally.

The equipoise and restraint of our dramatist seem to have been misunderstood by at least one German critic, who missed that sentimentality so dear to the German heart, and who felt that Galsworthy did not have the courage in this play to go to the depths of tragedy. This is curious, for we feel that the muffled tones are all the more impressive, just as the grief of a man is more terrible than the grief of a child, though the latter be accompanied by more noise. On 6 June 1914, *The Silver Box—Die Zigarettenkasten* —had its first German performance at Frankfort. It was brilliantly successful. One critic said that all the circumstances pointed to unrelieved tragedy, but that the author took good care to arrange that the audience should be spared excessive emotion. It has the stamp of "English good-nature,"

so that instead of being gloomily impressive, it becomes almost an idyl. "In its whole style it is through and through English."

To the credit of German audiences, however, let it be said that Galsworthy is highly appreciated. He has recently announced that all royalties coming from the acting or printing of his plays in Germany, shall be given to the relief of starving German children. This is something more than "englische Gemütlichkeit"; it is Christianity.

Although Galsworthy is highly respected in England and in America, his plays are not presented nearly so often as they deserve to be. We must rely mainly on stock and repertory companies for opportunities to see them. When I was in London in the Spring of 1912, the plays produced at the West End theatres did not compare in value with the programme presented by Miss Horniman's Manchester players, who fortunately happened to be visiting the metropolis. They had an out-of-the-way playhouse, and their prices were low. They gave *The Silver Box* in a manner that left nothing to be desired; the art shown in the whole presentation, the perfect teamplay of the company,

and the intelligence displayed in bringing out the value of every speech, are things I shall remember.

The four best plays of Mr. Galsworthy are *The Silver Box, Strife, Justice,* and *The Pigeon.* They are practically without the element of love and they have no sex interest. It is astonishing how successfully he can play the game without any trumps. His success emphasises the fact that he appeals to the mind almost exclusively; his plays are naturally devoid of charm, except the charm that is inherent in admirable structure, and the swift sword-play of intelligence. Of late years he has seemed to be falling into the obsession of sex, more in his novels, however, than in his dramas. It will be fatal to his genius. He is at his best when his mind is clearest. *The Man of Property* is a much greater novel than *The Dark Flower,* and there is no comparison at all between *The Silver Box* and *The Fugitive.*

Mr. Galsworthy has all the thoughtfulness and earnestness of Brieux, and he is an incomparably finer artist. Brieux has never written anything equal to *The Silver Box* or *Strife,* while the subtlety and fantasy dis-

played in *The Pigeon* are wholly beyond the grasp of the Frenchman. The two men are most nearly alike in *Justice* and *La Robe Rouge.* But *Justice,* with all its stirring scenes, is quite inferior to the three other plays (just mentioned) by its author, and is inferior for precisely the same reason that makes Brieux inferior to Galsworthy.

Brieux is primarily an advocate, Galsworthy is primarily an artist. Many playwrights whose works are devoid of cerebration and who succeed merely by "action" and excitement and suspense, and the familiar bag of tricks, could take lessons in technique from Mr. Galsworthy. Omitting the content (if one could) *The Silver Box* is a magnificent play. Not even Clyde Fitch, that master of beginnings, ever captured an audience more suddenly or more completely than they are caught at the first rise of the curtain in this drama. It is a perfect opening, and from the start every speech and every gesture push the action along to the triumphant conclusion. It is extraordinary that an author's first piece should be so weighty in thought and so brilliant in action.

Mr. Galsworthy's second play, *Joy,* was

presented at the Savoy Theatre, London, 24 September 1907. It is a scherzo, and seems even slighter than it is, because it comes between two mighty works.

On 9 March 1909, at the Duke of York's Theatre, and under the management of Granville Barker—the best producer of English plays in modern times, to whom all lovers of good drama owe so much—appeared *Strife.* The London *Athenæum,* which had then a reputation, after speaking of the admirable stage effects, and particularly of the acting of Norman McKinnel and Fisher White, said, "The play, however, overtops the acting; it bears out the promise of *The Silver Box,* and adds distinction to our stage."

In the autumn of 1909, the New Theatre opened its doors in New York. The first performance was *Antony and Cleopatra,* and was one of the most elaborate failures ever known. Then came *The Cottage in the Air,* which made only a faint impression. On 17 November was produced *Strife.* I have always believed that if the New Theatre had opened with this play, its history would have been happier. Like all new enterprises, it

had to fight for its life; it had terrible obstacles to contend with, including powerful antagonists who were determined in advance to destroy it, and whose joy at the initial disaster knew no bounds. Everything then contributed to fasten upon the New Theatre the chains of Dullness; it was known as a "highbrow" undertaking, where every normal man in the audience would be bored to death. Now when *Strife* appeared, the friends of the company cried "At last! this is what we expected! this is what we have been waiting for!" If only this play could have been chosen for the opening night, hostility would have been silenced, and a triumphant blow struck for the good cause.

The production of *Strife* was in every way worthy of the author and his drama. The New Theatre had the best stock company ever seen in America—a company fully on a par with the *Comédie Française*. You will never see anywhere in Europe a more finished or more intelligent presentation than that of *Strife*. There is to-day nothing in New York that can for a moment bear comparison with the standard of excellence maintained at the New Theatre.

I regret that the scenes were changed from Great Britain to the United States. It was unnecessary, for labour-strikes are not confined to one nation, and human nature is the same. This was the only alteration, and the author made it.

No one who witnessed it will forget the thrilling power of the acting. Mr. Louis Calvert was an ideal President Anthony, his cold steely speech contrasting powerfully with the lava-like eloquence of Mr. Albert Bruning, who took the part of Roberts, the strike-leader; Mr. Ferdinand Gottschalk and Mr. Robert Homans were at their best. That was a great day in the history of the stage.

The New York *Sun*, under the heading, "New Theatre has a 'Hit,'" commented as follows: "With the production of *Strife*, first seen in America last evening, the New Theatre did the right thing in the right way. It will be surprising if this fine play, coupled with the powerful acting of a company that cannot be matched in this country for all around excellence, does not give a new and vigorous impetus to the New Theatre's season, whose beginning, though displaying much promise, fell short of the full achieve-

ment desired by its best friends. *Strife* is the work of John Galsworthy, an Englishman who has won for himself an honorable position both as novelist and playwright. He is the author of *The Silver Box,* in which Miss Barrymore appeared here several years ago with credit to herself, though the public did not care to see her in a part which required the disguise of her good looks. . . . It would have been difficult to improve upon the acting in most of the parts. The principal honors of the evening were fairly divided by Louis Calvert as the beaten corporation president and Albert Bruning as the discomfited firebrand. Mr. Calvert played with a poise and reserve and a dramatic insight that are rare indeed upon our stage, making the most incisive effects with a minimum of visible effort. Mr. Bruning was a very whirlwind of prejudice and passion, lighting up his stormy scenes with the true fire of irreconcilable fanaticism.''

The whole action takes place between noon and six on one February afternoon, the hatreds and struggles of years, one might say of centuries, coming to a terrific climax. It is pure tragedy, for the irresistible force

meets the immovable object. Mr. Galsworthy does not tell us about the strike, he takes us there. We are in the centre of the storm. We attend a meeting of the Board of Directors, presided over by the implacable Anthony, who has won four strikes and expects to win this. His speeches would have delighted an economist of the old school. Everything leading to reconciliation seems to him cant. Labour and capital are mortal foes, and must fight to a finish every time. Every one who believes in any form of compromise or mutual forbearance seems to him as impotently sentimental as pacifists seem to everybody in war time. This *is* war, believes old Anthony; and sheer common sense demands no peace without victory, in order that the sacrifices already made shall not be in vain. Don't talk while we are fighting—simply hit harder! It is a clear and logical position, universally followed in international conflicts. Mr. Anthony has all the strength that comes from absolute convictions, shaded by no penumbra of doubt.

The leader of the strikers asks nothing better. Roberts also believes in fighting to a finish. Not merely this particular issue is at

stake, the whole cause of Humanity demands that we continue the conflict. What matter if children starve, and his own wife dies? Shall a man place children and his wife, his own selfish affairs, above Honour?

And now the audience is taken from the Directors' meeting to the kitchen of Roberts's cottage, where we see what we see in every strife, the suffering of helpless women. Then comes the meeting of the strikers, and the fiery address of the unyielding Roberts. To him Capital is as real as the Devil to our ancestors. "If we can shake that white-faced monster with the bloody lips." In the midst of his eloquence, word is brought to him that his wife is dead.

Anthony and Roberts both lose in the end —each leader is outvoted by his own party. A compromise is arranged under the precise terms that were proposed before the struggle began. Thus all the sacrifices are in vain, and nothing has been accomplished except to prove the futility of strife. Humanity however will learn little either from this play or from the struggle it represents, for men (and women too) have such an intense love of war that nothing can keep them

out of it. The voice of reason in a storm of passion is like a whisper in a north-east gale.

The duel comes to a close with the two beaten champions staring dully at each other in a kind of stupefied respect; each believes not only that his own heart's desire is crushed, but that the world has received a fatal setback. The world however has survived the vain struggles of passion-blinded men for many generations, and will probably continue to do so.

It is a great play. It is built not merely on the contemporary warfare between capital and labour, but on the eternal fighting instinct in human nature, an instinct as firmly implanted as hunger and lust. Not until Reason and Religion—which are very similar—control this instinct, will society be safe, and productive; every man sitting under his own vine and fig-tree in security, with none to make him afraid. That time will come; but it will come many centuries hence, for it is the method of humanity to try every wrong way before choosing the right one. Perhaps a thousand years from now the world will listen to the greatest Political

Economist of all time, the author of the Sermon on the Mount.

It is nothing short of amazing that Mr. Galsworthy could have written a play, wholly taken up with the strife between Labour and Capital, without making it an exposition rather than a drama, and without making it propaganda. Yet such is the fact. It is a work of art, not a sermon; and it is a play of action rather than talk. There is not one dull moment. Mr. Galsworthy has selected his material from human nature, and used it like an artist. Just as one dramatist will take love, another lust, another robbery, another jealousy, another ambition, and all will attempt to represent men and women moving in the labyrinth of error, crime, and folly, the clear-headed and superior audience watching with pity, or indignation, or laughter—so Mr. Galsworthy puts these directors and strikers under the lens of his powerful mind, even as Thoreau put the ants under a glass and watched them fight it out. We see their criminal stupidity, condemn it, and go on living in the same old way. The Spanish dramatist, Benavente, says, "One-

fourth part of the morality, goodness, and sense of justice which an audience brings into the theatre, would, if left outside, make the world over into paradise."

The next play, *Justice,* produced for the first time in London, 21 February 1910, has less equality in the scales than its title would seem to demand. In fact we have here less balance and more bias. The restraint and austerity so characteristic of *The Silver Box* and of *Strife* are less in evidence. This play is propaganda. The real criminal on trial is civilised society, its particular offence is the prison system, and it is found guilty. Solitary confinement is a bad business, and like all deliberate cruelty, is worse than inefficient. It is pleasant to know that as a result of the sensation produced in Great Britain by this play, certain much needed reforms were actually put through. Here Galsworthy stands by the side of Dickens, Brieux, and all literary men who have used their art for a distinct moral purpose.

But although the intention of the author is evident, the play being conceived in an ecstasy of rage against human oppression, the restraint of the artist controls most of

the scenes. He does not give us a noble hero unjustly imprisoned; he does not give us a hero at all. William Falder, the victim, is a weak, spineless young man, who is in love with a married woman, and has forged a cheque to pay their travelling expenses to a far country; curious, isn't it, how eagerly we respectable citizens wish he had succeeded in the endeavour? Possibly Browning would have said that his real crime consisted in the fact that he did not succeed in getting away, and that he allowed himself to be crushed by the terror and remorse brought on by solitary confinement. A true hero would have rejoiced in his crime, since he did it, like Ibsen's Nora, for love; he would have told the Judge boldly that he could do nothing else; and the weeks of solitary confinement would have been bright to him because he knew he was suffering for the woman of his heart. But alas, Falder is no hero. Legally he is fairly imprisoned, and on his release, his broken spirit makes him more incompetent than ever; so that when he is finally arrested again, he commits suicide, not because of any one misfortune, but because of the proverbial last straw. He could not stag-

ger along one inch further under the accumulating burdens society placed on his back.

Falder was quite lacking in the heroism that supports failure, and in the humour that supports failure. He really had no resources in his own soul. When Dickens first visited this country, he was taken to see a criminal who had spent many years in solitary confinement. Dickens looked at him in an access of horror and sympathy. "My God, man, do you mean to say you have been in solitary confinement all these years? How have you stood it?" The man phlegmatically replied, "Well, sonny, 'taint what you'd call a *rowdy* life."

There is only one villain in the play, and he does not appear. He is the drunken ruffian, Ruth's husband, who beats both her and the children, and from whom under the English law she can find no way of escape. All the other people are a mixture of good and evil, and all seem to have good intentions. What they lack is precisely the lack that enrages Galsworthy; they lack human understanding, and the sympathy born of it. They cannot put themselves in the place of the suffering man and woman—if they could, oppression

would cease and war be no more. From the point of view of orthodox political economy, Falder's suicide is a good thing; for his problem is thus eliminated. We need not worry about his case any further—only the woman and her children now remain on our hands. But from the point of view of Christianity, which is Mr. Galsworthy's view—whatever he calls himself—every human soul is precious in the sight of God and man. For a matter of a trifling sum of money, which he who lost it could afford to lose, two souls suffer shipwreck.

What shall we say to these things? Shrug our shoulders in the good old *non possumus* gesture? Or ask ourselves if we are really offending against the least of these? Falder is convicted of forgery. We are convicted of murder.

Notwithstanding the intrusive propaganda, *Justice* is a great play. As in *Strife* he takes us into the heart of the storm, so here, we are not told about prisons, we visit the convicts. The way the terrific climax of the delirious door-beating is reached, is one of the finest illustrations of Mr. Galsworthy's art. We are shown into the general office, like any

visitor; we hear the various views of the prison doctor, the prison chaplain, and so on. Gradually we inhale the atmosphere; we feel a sense of imprisonment ourselves. Outdoors looks good. Then come the interviews with the unfortunates, and the steady rise to climax.

The only artistic blot in this play is the last curtain speech. It is curious that this should ring so false, for our dramatist is a master of the difficult art of conclusion. The persons are grouped around the dead body of Falder, and we long for the curtain to fall. Suddenly the old clerk says, "No one'll touch him now! Never again! He's safe with gentle Jesus!"

This distracted everybody's attention from the tragedy, as completely and as discordantly as if some one on the stage had fired off a gun. The audience looked at each other in consternation, as though some hideously awkward thing had happened; as though some beautiful and brilliant comedy had ended with a particularly bad joke. Nor was this in the slightest degree the fault of the actor; for Mr. O. P. Heggie was throughout the evening adequate in every respect.

The first American performance was given by amateurs at Hull-House, Chicago, in April 1911. That it was impressive may be gathered from a letter I received from a university man. "I have just come back from Hull-House where I went to see a performance of Galsworthy's *Justice*. It was one of the most astounding presentations I have ever seen. . . . The acting of the parts—by the members of the various Hull-House Clubs—was wonderful."

Six years after the successful London first night passed before the play was seen on the American professional stage. Perhaps we might never have had the opportunity had it not been for the fact that there was a newspaper uproar over the management of Sing Sing Prison, and thus the occasion seemed timely. Even so, it required some courage to risk the undertaking. I am told that the play had been submitted to seven managers, who rejected it in turn, saying, "The American people will never stand for that highbrow stuff." Finally that enterprising man, John D. Williams, presented it, and it is pleasant to remember that New York responded so enthusiastically that the experi-

ment was as successful financially as it was in every other way. It was also important as the beginning of the career of John Barrymore, who for the first time gave full evidence of his true powers as an actor.

The first American night was on 2 March 1916, at the Shubert Theatre in New Haven. It was an occasion. The university and the city turned out in force; dramatic critics came from many other places, and Mr. Moderwell wrote a page in the following Monday's Boston *Transcript,* full of praise for Mr. Williams and of acute criticism of the play. It was one of the most exciting first nights I have ever witnessed. As I inched along in the crowded aisle after the final curtain, a lady asked me if I did not find this drama very depressing. I told her it had exactly the contrary effect on me; it was thrilling, exhilarating, transporting. There is nothing depressing on the stage except stupidity. Musical-comedy I find depressing.[1]

Any dramatist of the first-class, backed by sincere moral indignation, might have writ-

[1] (By the way, the best description of Musical-Comedy that I have ever read is in Arnold Bennett's novel, *The Roll-Call,* Chapter IX. It describes both actors and audience with an accuracy that leaves nothing to be desired.)

ten *Justice*. Only three men in the world could have written *The Pigeon*—Galsworthy, Barrie, Shaw, and it happens to have been written by Galsworthy. In many respects it is his greatest play. It has the superb construction, continuous movement—never halting between strokes—and economy of gesture so characteristic of its author's genius; in addition, it is filled with the atmosphere of poetry, mystery, and imagination—it has an irresistible wistful charm.

It would be instructive to compare this play with that sinister masterpiece of Ibsen's, *The Wild Duck*. There the Reformer only adds to the tragic misery of those he wishes to help; it is the lowest chord of pessimism sounded by a pessimist. Here the Reformer—if such he may be called—is, from the point of view of professors of political economy, equally inefficient; but is their view the only view?

Mr. Ashley Dukes, in his sometimes-penetrating book, *Modern Dramatists,* in commenting on Galsworthy, says "It should be the tritest commonplace to say that no playwright can make great drama out of little people." Perhaps there are no little people;

but taking the adjective in its ordinary sense, many a dramatist has made great drama out of precisely this class, the intensity being heightened by the defencelessness of the characters. Clyde Fitch used to say, "Great things do not happen to dramatists; great things happen to the little people they describe." We need, however, only to think of Galsworthy's plays to disprove what Mr. Dukes thinks ought to be a truism. It is surprising how much resemblance there is between a pint of water taken from a creek and a pint of water taken from Lake Superior.

The first night of *The Pigeon* took place at the Royalty Theatre, London, 30 January 1912. This is a study of an interesting temperament, and the effect produced upon it by men and women who are not merely little, but superfluous. An acute remark by George Meredith might serve as the gloss. "Much benevolence of the passive order may be traced to a disinclination to inflict pain upon ourselves."

When Andrew D. White was Minister to Russia, he took a walk on the streets of Mos-

cow with Count Tolstoi. A swarm of beggars approached the novelist, and he gave some kopecks to every one, for which he was taken to task by the American philosopher. Mr. White expressed the opinion that so far from indiscriminate alms doing good, they were positively injurious to the recipients and hence to society; to which Tolstoi replied that he could not concern himself with the ultimate results of any action; his religion commanded him to give to him that asketh, and he could not have peace of mind except by following the commands of Christ.

Thus Christopher Wellwyn—is the name significant?—the plucked pigeon of this play, cannot be happy with abundant and unruffled plumage. That sense of well-being which to many people is more comforting than religion, is torture to this man, so long as others are living in distress. The author's inward torment is reflected in this protagonist—why cannot he enjoy his meals and his clothes as others do? Well, he cannot—and this three-act "fantasy" helps to relieve his mind. Wellwyn's last pair of trousers are more galling than the shirt of

Nessus, so he gives them away. A man's conscience is certainly in active eruption when he cannot enjoy his own clothes.

This drama deals with modern "charity." Of course there are organised charities, there are municipal arrangements for the unclassed, there is always the poor-house. But there is no blood in machinery, there is little sweetness in officialdom, there is no bloom in institutions. (Remember the old woman in *Our Mutual Friend?*) Why can't these people go to the regular places legally provided for them? Don't we pay taxes to support such things? Yes, but if you were on your deathbed, and you thought one of your own sons or daughters were to be one of "these people," would your dying moments be filled with peace?

The key to this strangely beautiful play is found on the title-page, where the author has placed a quotation from Ferrand, one of his vagabonds, who is ironically described in the Dramatis Personæ as "an alien" (*who is my neighbour?*) "Without that, Monsieur, all is dry as a parched skin of orange."

The fairness of the author in stating the case is fully as much in evidence here as in

the preceding plays. The mendicants are not "nature's noblemen"—far from it; they are not "deserving poor," who are temporarily out of work through ill-health, accident, or hard times; they are incurable. I remember hearing a famous economist saying "There are no deserving poor."

The garden of true Christianity is not only full of useful vegetables; it glows with bright flowers. The sayings of its Founder are as beautiful as his deeds; no wonder He often cured people by speaking to them.

With the same emphasis that caused Mr. Galsworthy to set the prison scene in *Justice* on Christmas Day, he begins *The Pigeon* on Christmas Eve, and in Ferrand's speech he increases the emphasis.

"Monsieur, if HE himself were on earth now, there would be a little heap of gentlemen writing to the journals every day to call Him sloppee sentimentalist! And what is veree funny, these gentlemen they would all be most strong Christians. But that will not trouble you, Monsieur; I saw well from the first that you are no Christian. You have so kind a face."

Mr. Galsworthy allows "common sense"

to speak in the persons of the professor, the Canon, and the Justice of the Peace—we don't learn much. The fact is the dramatist's sympathy embraces all the wreckage of society; he does not think in terms of classes, he thinks only in terms of individuals. Every human soul is sacred.

There is more natural, spontaneous humour in this piece than in anything else the author has written; it ends on a marvellous jest, well befitting the date assigned to the last act. It is a brilliant and charming play, so soft in its outlines as to disguise the splendid bony structure beneath.

In the Spring of 1912, Mr. Winthrop Ames opened his Little Theatre in New York with *The Pigeon;* it ran quite through the season, and is in sharp contrast to the almost continual bad luck that followed subsequent selections. A play like *The Pigeon* is nearly as rare as its wild prototype.

In a letter to Mr. Barrett H. Clark, (given in Mr. Clark's *British and American Drama of To-day*) the dramatist makes the following interesting comments on *The Pigeon.* "About those dates in *The Pigeon.* Christmas Eve because of Ferrand's remark: 'HE

is come, Monsieur!' and the general tenour of Wellwyn's acceptance of every kind of outcast. New Year's Day because of Ferrand's remark: ' 'appy New Year!' which marks the disappearance of casual charity in favour of Institutionalism, of the era of outcasts in favour of the era of reformers. April 1st because of the joke at the end on the Humblemen which symbolises the fact, or rather the essence, of the play, that, while Wellwyn (representing sympathy and understanding) is being 'plucked' all through the play, he comes out and knows he does, on top at the end, as the only possible helper of the unhelpable. I hope this is sufficiently obscure!''

In comparing the theories set forth about the proper treatment of the poor with the actual poor individuals represented in *The Pigeon,* one is reminded of the remark in *Faust:*

> My worthy friend, all theories are grey,
> And green alone Life's golden tree.

Mr. Galsworthy wrote *The Eldest Son* in 1909, but it was not produced until 1912. Here again class is set over against class,

and the Head of the House finds his facile philosophy turned against himself. Nothing is more interesting in Galsworthy's plays than to see towering smooth-sailing rhetoric torpedoed by one fact. The famous "aloofness" of the dramatist is in evidence all through this drama, his reserve, restraint, and reticence; but it is inferior to *The Silver Box* and to *The Pigeon,* in its lack of relief, while it has not the sombre majesty of *Strife.* It would, however, make a reputation for almost any other writer.

In 1913 appeared *The Fugitive,* where the author deals with a favourite theme in his novels—love and marriage. This play is a failure. He champions the woman against English hypocrisy in such a manner that we have a *reductio ad absurdum.* Her drinking poison on the stage is a relief to the reader and dangerously near the ridiculous to the spectator. I have never seen on the stage a tragedy by a truly great dramatist which so totally failed to impress the audience.

In *The Mob* (1914) we have the individual against the crowd. The tremendous event that followed hard upon its presentation was so unforeseen by the author as to make the

piece curiously opportune. I wonder what would have happened if any one had attempted to produce it after the first of August of that memorable year? It shows what happened to a man who dared to oppose the South African War. He was mobbed and killed, and later generations erected a statue to his memory. The hero made the melancholy error of attempting to fight public opinion with reason. One might as well fight a rhinoceros with a paper-cutter.

In the autumn of 1920, *The Mob* was produced successfully at the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York.

In 1920 Mr. Galsworthy published three plays in a single volume, being the Fourth Series of his Dramatic Works. These are *A Bit O' Love, The Foundations, The Skin Game.* They do not singly or collectively equal his earlier pieces in value or in importance, but they are emphatically worth reading, and the last was successful on the London and New York stage. In *A Bit O' Love,* we have the individual martyr again, his attitude being incomprehensible to the crowd. The clergyman's wife has left him because she loves some other man, and the villagers

cannot understand his "calm, dishonourable, vile submission," because they do not know the meaning of the word Love. In the end, the clergyman is saved from suicide by a chance, and in the moonlight he utters this prayer: "God of the moon and the sun; of joy and beauty, of loneliness and sorrow—give me strength to go on, till I love every living thing!" Mr. Galsworthy wants us all to *understand;* and no one can understand without love. In this play, however, both the motive and the philosophy are more admirable than the art.

The author calls *The Foundations,* produced at the Royalty Theatre, London, June 1917, "an extravagant play." I should like to have seen it, for I am certain it acts better than it reads. Although it deals with an intensely serious theme—social revolution—it has an abundance of humour. It has a curious similarity in places to *The Admirable Crichton.*

To *The Skin Game,* Mr. Galsworthy has added the parenthesis (A Tragi-Comedy) and the quotation, "Who touches pitch shall be defiled." As *Strife* proved the sad futility of fighting between Capital and Labour, so this

proves the tragic consequences of quarrelling between two families, that of the country gentleman, and that of the newly-rich man. Once more class is arrayed against class. There is abundance of action here, including an admirable auction scene. Both sides lose, for the newly-rich man is beaten, and the methods employed by the aristocrats to beat him are fatal to their own honour and peace of mind.

If the philosophy of the author has not been made clear by his own plays and the comments in this essay, I am sorry; for there is only one thing better than understanding his philosophy, and that is the adoption of it. It is simply the good old word Charity as used in the year 1611. Practically all of his dramas are expositions of the thirteenth chapter of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. His lectures and essays are more didactically devoted to the same admirable purpose. If every American and Briton would read and translate into action the ideas in Mr. Galsworthy's article, *American and Briton,* the peace of the world might be assured.

With reference to the art of the dramatist, Mr. Galsworthy has written so clearly that

I am going to follow the example of Mr. Lewisohn and of Mr. Clark, and quote. "A Drama must be shaped so as to have a spire of meaning. Every grouping of life and character has its inherent moral; and the business of the dramatist is so to pose the group as to bring that moral poignantly to the light of day. . . . The art of writing true dramatic dialogue is an austere art, denying itself all license, grudging every sentence devoted to the mere machinery of the play, suppressing all jokes and epigrams severed from character, relying for fun and pathos on the fun and tears of life. From start to finish good dialogue is hand-made, like good lace; clear, of fine texture, furthering with each thread the harmony and strength of a design to which all must be subordinated . . . the question of naturalistic technique will bear, indeed, much more study than has yet been given it. The aim of the dramatist employing it is evidently to create such an illusion of actual life passing on the stage as to compel the spectator to pass through an experience of his own, to think and talk and move with the people he sees thinking, talking and moving in front of him. . . . A good plot is

that sure edifice which rises out of the interplay of circumstances on temperament, or of temperament on circumstance, within the enclosing atmosphere of an idea."

Well, all this is true, admirably expressed, and illustrated by the author's practice. It is now easier to understand, why, having written five or six great plays, and being one of the most notable playwrights of the twentieth century, he has nevertheless created hardly any persons that will always be remembered as individuals. He has not added Personalities to modern drama—personalities like Candida, or Peter Pan, or Cyrano. The reason is clear, I think; his persons are the embodiment of ideas—they are flesh and blood, they are real, but we are more interested in what they represent than in their own idiosyncrasies. Or, as the late Mr. Calderon said of Chekhov, our interest in his plays is centrifugal rather than centripetal; our attention is not primarily drawn to the fortunes of a little group on the other side of the footlights, but rather to Humanity.

CLYDE FITCH

When I was a boy in the Hartford Public High School one of my classmates was named William C. Fitch. Of all the students he was the most peculiar, the most eccentric. He was unlike the normal boy in clothes, appearance, gait, manners, tastes, language, and voice. No other youth would ever have dared to wear such clothes; they were indeed clean, without spot or blemish, looked as if they were being worn for the first time, which in itself fills the ordinary wearer with terror as he enters the school grounds; but the radiance of these glossy garments almost hurt the unprotected eye, and they were cut in a manner that we should now call futurist.

People dress in the fashion, as everybody knows, not to attract attention, but to avoid it; this boy seemed at once to court publicity and to be indifferent to it. His gait was strange, the motive power seeming to dwell exclusively in the hips; if you can imagine a gay sidewheel excursion steamer, with the

port and starboard wheels moving in turn instead of together, you will obtain a fair idea of the approach of William C. Fitch. His face was impressively pale, looking as if it had never been exposed to the sun; this pallor was accentuated by hair both black and copious. His manners seemed absurdly affected until we found they were invariable; he was never caught off his guard. His language, judged by schoolboy standards, was ridiculously mature; instead of speaking the universal dialect of slang, he talked English. His voice was very high, frequently breaking into falsetto, and even in ordinary conversation it sounded like that of an hysterical woman who had just missed the train. He had not the faintest interest in any form of outdoor sport, and never pretended to have any. When the bell rang for "long recess" every other one of us rushed into the school yard and played furiously for twenty minutes; he remained in the schoolroom, writing notes on perfumed paper and tossing them to the girls, some of whom were unreservedly interested both in these missives and in their author. Nor did he confine his epistolary endeavours to recess; he seemed to be deep in

correspondence during most of the school hours. I remember sitting next to him in the class in Cæsar, and despite the ever imminent danger of being suddenly called upon to recite—which he did easily and well—I observed he was engaged in the rapid composition of a letter on light blue paper; when he had finished it to his satisfaction he tossed it with surprising accuracy to a maiden who was waiting to receive it. He was fourteen years old.

To us he seemed quite impossible; but none of us then guessed how offensive we must have seemed to him. When we came in from football, streaming with sweat, stewing in our own juice, and sat down beside this immaculate person, whose very hair looked clean, what inner repugnance he felt we never knew; he never betrayed his soul to boys.

What did we do to him? It would be better to ask, What didn't we do to him? So far as we could we made his life a burden. Imagine any boy such as I have described, trying to order his life in his own way among ruthless barbarians. In school life—as indeed in most communities—conformity is king. Those who will not run with the herd

and think with the herd and bellow with the herd commit the unpardonable sin. But small boys, on regarding an original specimen, do not shrug their shoulders like Frenchmen, and mutter *Après tout, c'est son affaire;* they insist on an attempt to remake the oddity after their own image. I remember one morning a boy opened a window, while several others picked up the future dramatist and threw him through the aperture without waiting to see whither he went or where he landed. So far as I can remember, he never made much show of resistance, nor did he protest too much; but he never changed in one iota; so that we finally gave him up as hopeless, and let him alone, which he perhaps foresaw we should ultimately have to do.

We thought he was effeminate, a mollycoddle, a sissy; we did not know that he had the courage of his convictions, and was thus the bravest boy in school. When he went to Amherst he exhibited the same singular independence. I can remember to this day the flaring bright blue suit he wore in Hartford; he affected the same brilliant colour as a freshman in college. I learn this from the

Memorial Introduction to his Plays. One of his professors said, "When Clyde first appeared upon the campus he wore a suit of a peculiar blue—sufficiently blue and peculiar to call down upon him the ruthless gibing of the upper classmen. For days he persisted in his attire, and faced the music. So I was not surprised when, one evening, he put in his appearance at my house. He explained the situation and asked my advice. I felt that whatever decision he might make must come from him, and I told him so. Then in a perfectly quiet voice he said, as he turned to go, 'I guess I'll stick it out.' "

Many years later, when he came to New Haven to superintend the first performance of a new play, we walked together from my house to the theatre. He had an extraordinary suit, only partially concealed by a gorgeous overcoat, and on his head was the most amazing hat ever worn by a male creature. Every one we met stopped to stare; so far as I could make out, he was quite unaware of the sensation he produced.

Once, while talking with him in his house in New York, he went back of his own accord to our school days. "I knew, of course,

that everybody regarded me as a sissy; but I would rather be misunderstood than lose my independence. The only concession I ever made was this: on stormy days, my mother forced me to wear overshoes to school, which I hated, and I knew it would not do to appear rubber-shod before the other boys. So I always hid these offensive things before reaching school, and put them on again on my way home. I hated football, baseball; was bored to death by all sports; and I did not see why I should do things I hated to do merely to conform to public opinion."

Judged by the standards most people use in estimating success, he was right and all the rest of us were wrong; for in later years we are credibly informed that his annual income was $250,000 a year; and none of us hard-headed practical men ever earned as much as that. So you see he finally won the respect of the Philistines. The wife of Andrea del Sarto thought her husband was an ass, because he spent his time painting pictures, instead of acting like a man; but other people, she must have reflected, were even greater asses, because they paid real money for these things.

If my memory serves me, that accomplished actress Miss Elsie de Wolfe once expressed her amazement that Clyde Fitch should know more about women than they knew about themselves. She said that at a rehearsal her cue was to walk upon the stage in high emotion; she did so; but her inner complacency was jarred by the voice of the playwright coming out of the dark auditorium: "That isn't the way to walk in order to express your feelings in this scene; I'll show you." He did; he walked on, and she saw immediately that he was right and she was wrong. She could not understand his insight; but I could, for I went to school with him. During the long recesses when we were playing football he was spending those minutes with the girls, for he instinctively knew that they had more to teach him than we. That is where he laid the foundation of his success as a dramatist, even as Richardson learned how to write novels by composing letters for the village maids.

In his college days at Amherst he made such an impression in acting women's rôles in theatricals that his contemporaries there have never forgotten it. As Lydia Languish

he created a veritable sensation; I remember reading about it in the public press. It is pleasant to record his loyalty to his college in later years; his valuable library is now at Amherst, and he left money for the endowment of a professorship. If one wishes to know exactly how he looked in maturity, one has only to view the portrait painted by William M. Chase, presented by his mother to the college. It is perfect.

Some dramatists do not betray their cleverness in conversation; either they cannot talk, or they save their best for the footlights. It was not so with Clyde Fitch. He was one of the most brilliant talkers I ever knew—his wit was spontaneous and inexhaustible. Once, after he gave an address to my class at Yale, I invited a dozen undergraduates to meet him at dinner. He had to take a train to Boston at one o'clock in the morning. After dinner we sat around an open fire, the students sitting in a semicircle on the floor while the dramatist talked. Such talk! The only interruptions were occasional questions; for hours he inspired and delighted us all, and we were sorry enough when the time came for him to leave.

When his posthumous play, *The City,* was produced in New Haven shortly before the regular first night in New York, December 1909, many of us were peculiarly stirred, not merely by the sharp climaxes but because, on the eve of sailing to Europe that fatal year, he had come to New Haven and talked freely to my students on this very drama. He gave a detailed account of the plot, speaking with extraordinary zest; he was confident that the idea on which the story was built would impress American audiences; he had already selected the cast, and told us he would conduct rehearsals as soon as he returned in the early autumn. Never shall I forget my emotion toward the close of the first act, when the hero spoke these broken sentences, among the very last that came from the playwright's pen:

"Why, it was only a minute ago he was there, talking with me! It doesn't seem possible—that now—he's dead—dead—gone for good out of this life! I don't understand it! What does it all mean?"

The driving idea of *The City* is, of course, that character can triumph over environment—it is not New York that ruins young

men, they are ruined by their own weakness. The city does not destroy them; it tests them.

"*No!* You're all wrong! Don't blame the City. It's not her fault! It's our own! What the City does is to bring out what's strongest in us. If at heart we're good, the good in us will win! If the bad is strongest, God help us! Don't blame the City! *She* gives the man his opportunity; it is up to *him* what he makes of it! A man can live in a small town all his life, and deceive the whole place and *himself* into thinking he's got all the virtues, when at heart he's a hypocrite! But the village gives him no chance to find it out, to prove it to his fellows—the small town is too easy! *But the City!!!* A man goes to the gates of the City and knocks!—New York or Chicago, Boston or San Francisco, no matter *what* city so long as it's big, and busy, and selfish, and self-centred. And she comes to her gates and takes him in, and she stands him in the middle of her market place—where Wall Street and Herald Square and Fifth Avenue and the Bowery and Harlem and Forty-second Street all meet, and there she strips him naked of all his disguises—and all his hypocrisies—and she paints his

ambition on her fences, and lights up her skyscrapers with it!—what he *wants* to be and *what he thinks he is!*—and then she says to him, 'Make good if you can, or to hell with you!' And what is in him comes out to clothe his nakedness, and to the City he can't lie! *I know, because I tried!*"

A man goes to the gates of the City and knocks. Clyde Fitch went to New York, a young man, with no money, no influence, no powerful friends; by sheer brains and pluck he raised himself to the heights of fame. It is no easy thing for an individual to conquer a city; but Clyde Fitch conquered New York, even as O. Henry conquered it.

His public career covered exactly twenty years, from 1889 to 1909. When he began to write, American drama scarcely existed; when he died, it was a reality. He did more for the American stage than any other man in our history; when the chronicles of our original plays come to be written, he will fill a large space. He made a permanent impression on the modern theatre; for he was essentially a man of the theatre. The same independence that characterised him at school and college was conspicuous after he

became a public figure. Outside of a few favourite actors and actresses, his most intimate friends did not belong to the profession. He was not popular with fellow dramatists, with professional critics, or with the camp followers; perhaps still less popular with reformers, theorists, and "uplifters." He held himself aloof both from the group of successful playwrights and from the undisciplined army of bohemians. He would not attend public dinners, public meetings of those interested either financially or intellectually in the drama, and the only formal public address he ever wrote—fortunately preserved in the Memorial Edition—is one that with great difficulty I persuaded him to stand and deliver for the first time at Yale. He told me that he could not endure the ways of the bohemians and was bored by the reformers. He said, "I am not a bohemian, not a sporting man, not a man-about-town, not a preacher—I am simply an observer of life who writes plays for the theatre." He owed comparatively little to others; he could not work in partnership or in collaboration. He was too individual; and, although his plays reflect the turbulent stream of social life, he

really loved solitude. In fact, it was necessary to him. He built two houses in the country, and fled thither whenever it was possible to do so. Every spring he departed for the Continent, and there he wrote off the plots that were constantly rising to the surface of his mind. Much of his composition was done in Venice.

He has often been blamed for the feverish rapidity with which he produced plays. He spoke frankly about this, saying it was the only way he could work. At one time he had four original plays running in New York. One evening he gave birth to twins. He made a parental speech at one theatre, and ran across the street to receive public congratulations at the other. He was always modest about himself and his work, never assumed the pose of either a literary man or a prophet, saying that at any moment his ability might forsake him, or his vogue vanish. He worked at high pressure, as though he knew that the night was coming. Yet he wrote each play in his own hand five times—and to those who are curious about such matters it may be interesting to describe his method. He took large sheets of paper, and

used five pencils of different colours, changing the hue for each version, writing over, under, and around the lines of the original draft. "Then I can tell at a glance which is my first, second, or fifth thought."

He was constantly surprised and amused by the way in which his imaginary characters behaved. He told me, as he told many others, that although he would start a play with a definitely conceived plot the persons of the drama would persist in going their own gait—often the opposite of what he had planned. "I usually am compelled to let them have their will."

Clyde Fitch wrote thirty-three original plays, twenty-three dramatisations of other pieces or stories, and left three original plays in manuscript. This is prolific, but nothing in comparison with Thomas Heywood or Lope de Vega. All but one of his original plays dealt with American subjects, and generally with contemporary life. Mr. Walter Prichard Eaton says that if we took Fitch's works and correctly illustrated them, they would give to future generations a better idea of American life from 1890 to 1910 than newspapers or historical records.

Clyde Fitch was fortunate in gaining success and popularity early in life; when he had been out of college four years, he found himself famous. Shortly after graduation, he went to New York, supported himself by private tutoring, and attempted (in vain) to win attention by the composition of short stories; I have some of these and they are rarities. Then he wrote some plays of no merit; but in the season of 1889–1890 he produced *Beau Brummell,* a play that won instant recognition, that had a long run, that was frequently revived, and that deserved all its success.

It ought to be said that he owed his first opportunity and hence his first success to the late Edward A. Dithmar, accomplished dramatic critic of the *New York Times.* Mr. and Mrs. Dithmar took the young adventurer into their home; Mr. Dithmar introduced him to Richard Mansfield, and made it possible for him to get a hearing for *Beau Brummell.*

Modern drama began in Germany, in England, and in America at about the same time. In Germany the year 1889 saw the production of Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang* and Sudermann's *Die Ehre;* in England the year

1892 was made important by Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan,* and Bernard Shaw's *Widowers' Houses,* followed the next year by Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray;* and on the evening of 17 May 1890, with the first performance of *Beau Brummell,* American drama came into its own. The two hundred and fiftieth representation of the piece took place on 30 January 1891, and it is not too much to say that every one of these performances delighted the audience. What would have happened if Clyde Fitch and Richard Mansfield had not worked in partnership, who can say? How long the dramatist would have waited for success, who can tell? But although Richard Mansfield gave the author the idea of the play, was of constant assistance to him in the course of its composition and in rehearsals, and glorified it by his magnificent interpretation, the play stands on its own independent merits, and is one of the best ever written by an American. If it had depended on the actor alone for its success, it would not be worth preservation in print; but the fact is, that without any theatre or acting, read as a book in the lamplit silence of the library, it makes a dis-

tinct impression. It brought the old Beau back to life again; it created a Personality in the literature of the theatre. To me at any rate he is not merely the glass of fashion and the mould of form, but a real man; so I thought of him as I stood with uncovered head by his grave one summer evening in Caen.

In the autumn of 1889, Clyde Fitch presented the scenario to Richard Mansfield, and naturally awaited the decision with uncontrollable excitement. In a letter written 6 November, quoted in the Memorial Edition, he said, "Negotiations are on the *tapis* for a play to be written for RICHARD MANSFIELD by WM. CLYDE FITCH, and I am awaiting a dispatch now to go to Philadelphia to clinch things with Mansfield, who is playing there this week. It all may elude my grasp, as so many things have done, but if it doesn't, isn't it, oh, isn't it an opportunity! The subject of the play is to be Beau Brummell."

No young or old author could have been more fortunate than to have his hero interpreted by Richard Mansfield, the most intelligent, the most brilliant, the most impressive

actor of his generation; he was the incarnation of great characters in history and in fiction, and when he died, he left a space that no one could even begin to fill. I regard his death, in the plenitude of his powers, as the greatest loss suffered by the modern stage.

Despite the more than gratifying success of this piece, Clyde Fitch had years of struggle and disappointment ahead. Although he wrote constantly, it was not until the year 1898 that he hit the target again, and not until 1901 that he gained critical recognition as a true American dramatist. In 1898 he made a reverberating stroke with *Nathan Hale* and with *The Moth and the Flame;* but the former has no real value, and owed its popularity mainly to the skilful acting of Nat Goodwin and Maxine Elliott; the latter is only superficially clever, its climax at the end of the first act having been incomparably better done by Henry Becque in *Les Corbeaux.* He returned to American history the next year with *Barbara Frietchie,* in which he was fortunate to have as interpreter Julia Marlowe; and in 1903 he produced *Major André,* which if I remember rightly, he withdrew after the first night, as, like Charles

Lamb, he had no idea it was so bad until he saw it.

The first play of any real importance after *Beau Brummell* came eleven years later, *The Climbers,* and stands to-day as one of its author's five masterpieces—the others being *Beau Brummell, The Truth, The Girl with the Green Eyes,* and *The City.* Although in 1901 he was a successful playwright, and leading actors and actresses were proud to appear in his productions, he had difficulty in getting *The Climbers* accepted. In August 1900, he wrote from France, "I have had a disappointment. Frohman decides not to do *The Climbers.* It is a real bitter disappointment, for I believe so much in the play."

This is one of the comparatively rare occasions when that astute manager was at fault, but he is not the only one who rejected it. Others said, "The American public will never stand for that funeral stuff in the first act." But as Mr. Eaton remarks, they did, about five rows deep after the last row of chairs. It was finally produced at the Bijou Theater, New York, 21 January 1901, with a cast that contained such admirable actors as Mr. Ferdinand Gottschalk, Miss Amelia

Bingham, and Miss Clara Bloodgood. The last-named became the author's favourite actress; and I shall never forget the letter he wrote to me when he received the news of her tragic death. But the success of this play was the author's; no acting can spoil it. I saw it once, presented by the worst stock company ever permitted to live; even through their grotesque presentation and extraordinary pronunciation of English, the drama glowed with vitality.

It is possible that Clyde Fitch studied Henry Becque with some profit. The scene in the first act of *The Climbers,* where the Man of Business tells the silly widow and her three daughters that her late husband's supposed wealth consists of liabilities, is like the situation in *Les Corbeaux,* where the helpless widow and her three daughters learn the same terrifying information. The difference between the two plays is even more illuminating than the similarity. It is the difference between an American writer, who simply did not dare to drown his characters in the deep waters of tragedy, and a French writer whose love of truth was so uncompromising that he had no pity either on his characters or on his

audience. In justice to American audiences, however, it should be remembered that Becque's play is so terrible that Parisian audiences could not endure it; it has never had anything resembling popularity; its author lived in the direst poverty; even his grave was neglected until Antoine called public attention to the scandal; and to-day, although Becque has had a powerful influence on modern drama, and his name is honoured by all lovers of what is truly great in the theatre, his masterpiece is almost never revived.

Like all the plays of Clyde Fitch, *The Climbers* is full of limitations and full of faults. It nowhere rises to the heights of thought and passion, where Ibsen, Hauptmann, Rostand dwell in the serene air, contemplating the clouds below and the sky above; for as the saint in unshakable security must be able to masterfully survey his own passions, so the true artist must live aloft where he can look down on his blind and suffering creatures, even as God regards the world he has created. So far as I can remember, no American has ever written a drama that even suggests the sublimity of the noblest art.

And there are faults as well as limitations in this New York play. There is the setting of melodrama in the snow-fall; there are speeches dripping with sentimentality; there is stock burlesque. But when the worst has been said, *The Climbers,* as a representation of metropolitan life, is superior to any play that preceded it in American history. There is an audacity in the opening scene that frightened the manager, but which the audience welcomed with hearty recognition, because they knew it was true. The wolfish way in which sandwiches are devoured is characteristic of all people at funerals, except those very few who are broken-hearted. Meals are never eaten with more gusto than at funerals—is it an instinctive will-to-live? I remember many years ago, when I read somewhere in the works of Jonathan Swift that people never looked so happy as at funerals, I was shocked; but if, omitting the first two carriages, one will look at the faces in the long succession of vehicles, one will have to admit that Swift was not far from the truth.

If there is no creative power of the first magnitude displayed in this comedy, there is

extraordinary ingenuity, extraordinary dexterity, and a faithful report of contemporary manners. If we do not go deep enough, it is true to the life it undertakes to represent.

Clyde Fitch was not only a faithful reporter of the aspects of life around and about him; he was equally successful in reconstructing the image of past scenes. In *Beau Brummell,* he had to rely on his reading; but in *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines,* he produced a comedy that is as charming as an old-fashioned garden, and which is full of memories and observations of his own boyhood. It was presented for the first time, 4 February 1901, two weeks after *The Climbers,* ran through the entire season, was revived the following year, and in 1907 again brought back to the stage; it gave Miss Ethel Barrymore one of her first great opportunities, which she fully improved. Every person in the audience who could remember the seventies was delighted with the old language, the old songs—*Champagne Charley, Shoo Fly*—the obsolete slang, the landing wharf, the Brevoort House, and the costumes! Well do I remember as a boy the vogue of The Grecian Bend.

Spectators at the first night of a Fitch play were not only reasonably sure of hearing clever dialogue and an entertaining story; they were eager for the rise of the curtain, knowing in advance that some familiar aspect of life would be faithfully represented. Thus, in *The Stubbornness of Geraldine,* the deck of an ocean liner is revealed, with every typical passenger doing and saying typical things; in another play, a church wedding; in *Girls,* we have life in a New York flat, with the accursed rattling of the steam-radiator; the girls washing their handkerchiefs, and spreading them to dry on the window-pane; in another comedy, we have the busy floor of a department-store.

On 25 December 1902, was presented for the first time *The Girl with the Green Eyes.* Had its author been able to write a convincing last act, this would undoubtedly have been his best play. But he never could write a good last act; few have been able to do so. It seems to be the final test of the playwright's art. Clyde Fitch became a master of *attack;* his first acts were brilliant in exposition, taking the audience by storm; but he almost invariably weakened toward the

close. This is probably the reason why so many professional critics, who felt in the early scenes, that after all the author had achieved a masterpiece, left the theatre cold, and transferred the chill to their reviews. But although as a rule Clyde Fitch received less than his deserts from the critics, they literally saved for him and for the American stage *The Girl with the Green Eyes.* For once, and the only time in his career, the critics were more enthusiastic than the audience. The first night this play fell flat; there was almost no audience at all for the next few nights, and it seemed as though the play must be withdrawn; it had every indication of complete popular disapproval. But the critics refused to see it die. They kept up their praises in the papers; they exhorted the people of New York to go to see a really fine drama; finally their prayers were heard, the play rose from the shadow of death, took on vitality, and had a vigourous life for the next six months.

As *The Climbers* opened with a funeral, this opens with a marriage, where every detail of a fashionable wedding-party is presented. Yet even in the first hour after the

ceremony, we see the suggestion of jealousy that darkens the drama, and should have turned it into an irredeemable tragedy. Indeed the play should have closed at the end of the third act. Although there are many clever and amusing scenes—like the satire on tourists before the Apollo Belvedere—the motive force consists of one idea, resembling in this respect *The Truth* and *The City,* which is the reason why these three are the most important works in their author's career. The text is found in the third act, in a line spoken to Jinny by her mother: "Jealousy has no saving grace, and it only destroys what is always most precious to you."

Now it is a curious thing that jealousy, which has no touch of mirth or humour, is almost always represented on the modern stage as *funny.* It has been the foundation of many farces; but although Shakespeare revealed its tragic possibilities, I know of only one modern play where it is honestly and truthfully presented—*The Girl with the Green Eyes.* Clyde Fitch never did anything more fine, more delicate, than in displaying the gradual growth of jealousy in

Jinny's mind. The conversations between her and her husband are so admirable—not a shade too light or too dark—that if he could have continued in other plays with such strong and such subtle analysis of character, he really would have become a great dramatist. In all his work he is true to the surface of life—but here he deals with the underlying causes of speech and conduct. He analyses as well as portrays.

I do not recall anywhere in American literature a study of jealousy as accurate and as complete as this, except in Howells's novel, *A Modern Instance.* Yet jealousy accompanies love as frequently as one finds weeds in a garden of flowers. The late Emile Faguet said that jealousy, with all its ugliness, was yet the sole proof of the existence of real love; wherever you find jealousy, there you have the indubitable proof that love exists; and if there is no jealousy, there is no love. The middle clause of the preceding sentence is probably true; I do not believe the first and third. Clyde Fitch's play itself is against the Frenchman; for surely the man loved his wife.

In this drama the conversation itself is

dramatic; the most stirring scenes have almost no "action."

The author's favourite among his productions was *The Truth,* produced for the first time in October 1906; it failed. In the following year it achieved a distinct success in London, was played in many Continental cities, and was revived at the Little Theatre in New York in 1914. It did not seem old-fashioned, because its interest lies not in its study of fashionable society, but in its study of human nature. Its failure in New York, while a disappointment, heightened its maker's love for it, as mothers sometimes love crippled children with more eager intensity. Then the recognition it received in London and in Europe was doubly sweet. The Memorial Introduction cites a letter written from Berlin in April 1908: "I wish you . . . who have always taken me and my work seriously, *and know what I put into it,* and from what a standard I wrote, could have shared my joy and satisfaction at Hamburg." Again: "The papers are very good in Italy for *The Truth, La Verità,* but they complain of my Puritanism. They say I have 'exquisite wit,' 'originality,' and 'deep psychol-

ogy,' but I think they were a little disappointed there were no Indians in it.''

This drama, while not so powerful as *The City,* nor so subtle as the best scenes in *The Girl with the Green Eyes,* is Clyde Fitch's most complete work; it contains incomparably the best last act he ever produced, for the last act of *Beau Brummell* really wrote itself. Every character in it is a distinct personality; the conversations between father and daughter are very fine. She is literally a natural-born liar; and she suffers under inquisition like a criminal under the third degree. It is like a fox-hunt.

The enormous success of the first night of *The City,* New York, 22 December 1909, one of the most thrilling first nights in the history of the American stage, accentuates one's regret that the author could not have lived to see it. It would have been to him a rich reward for many disappointments, and it would have stimulated him to the composition of plays—of which this is a forecast—that would have given him a higher place in dramatic literature. The popular demonstration swept even the critics off their feet. This is what *The Tribune* said the next morning:

"An audience half wild with excitement roared its approval last night. The applause of hands was drowned in the tremendous cheering that swept from orchestra to balcony. It is long since such a demonstration has taken place in a New York theatre. The audience exhausted itself with cheering. And the cheers were deserved. They were earned by the power of the playwright and by the power of the acting. It seems tame to say merely that the play is strong, for in its strongest scene it is tremendous. The play is strong as a raging bull, an elephant in passion, a hungry tiger; strong as man the animal is strong, not with the strength of man in the balanced exercise of his faculties, capacities and powers. . . . Life? Beyond question. A powerful presentation of life by dramatist and actors; a presentation that appals, horrifies; to the last degree 'realistic,' 'modern' to the brim; a play of greed, hypocrisy, blackmail, theft, and murder. . . . The art employed is remarkable, the effect is at moments mighty."

Such language will seem absurd only to those who were not present. It is a faithful report of the effect produced on the audience.

And it seems cruel that Clyde Fitch could not have lived to read such a criticism, for it is exactly what he had hoped to receive when writing the play. The man who had been called again and again the *milliner* of the American theatre finally reached a peak which his critics had declared inaccessible.

My own belief is that Clyde Fitch wrote this "unpleasant" play to prove the length of his tether. Perhaps he was tired of reading that he was a mere confectioner who delighted in the architecture of candy; he seems throughout this play to say "I can be as morbid and as tragic as you please." The second act revealed even to his oldest friends a new Clyde Fitch. The intensity of the dialogue may be judged by the fact that during this scene the heroine—so far as there is one—is shot dead without dropping the curtain. Her body is carried from the room, and in two minutes we have quite forgotten her, so terrific is the verbal duel between hero and villain. The contest now is for the hero's soul, which frankly interests the audience more than the life or death of any one in the story. To my mind this is the greatest single triumph ever attained by our drama-

tist—for it is simply the exaltation of the spiritual over the physical in the very whirlwind of action.

It is amusing to remember that Pittsburgh, hearing in advance that at one point in the play the degenerate villain shouts "You're a God damn liar!" informed the management that unless this phrase were changed or omitted, the production would be forbidden in that town. The mother of the dead playwright remonstrated to no avail; she would have withdrawn the piece altogether if she had had her way; finally it was given with the word "God" omitted. I have not heard that Pittsburgh then or since objected to musical comedies.

Every one of the three plays—*The Girl with the Green Eyes, The Truth, The City*—is founded on a single idea; there is not only observation of life, there is a spiritual motive force.

There is nothing more superficial than to say that Fitch was superficial. As a rule, he chose to deal with those aspects of life that are superficial; but they are a part of real life, and he dealt with them—not always, but often—like a true artist. He was constantly

accused of striving for theatrical effect, which is to a large extent exactly the thing to strive for in the theatre. No one ever hated him so much as those who had tried to do what he did, and failed. His position, in the critical consensus, was almost exactly the position of Sudermann in Germany. When a new play by that writer appears, one knows in advance exactly what the critics will say, for many of them have had him "placed" for years, and their minds are made up before the curtain rises. It is indeed interesting to observe that the contemporary criticism of Sudermann might be taken as the stock criticism of Fitch. In the *London Times Literary Supplement* in July 1920, I find the following words written about Sudermann's latest play, *Die Raschoffs,* in which I will simply substitute the word Fitch for Sudermann, and New York for Berlin. "This latest drama of Fitch has recently enjoyed a remarkably successful run in New York. Its reception has at least shown that Fitch has lost little, if anything, of his extraordinary grasp of stage methods and his power of gripping attention by means of a strong plot, bright if superficial dialogue, and cleverly

contrived dramatic situations. Further than that, however, the critic will not be able to go; the play, in fact, may be fairly summed up by saying that it is exactly typical of Fitch. . . . These disadvantages, however, Fitch is able to overcome by the presentation of a series of situations of the greatest theatrical effectiveness, calculated to hold the attention of any audience."

Now this in itself is not a crime. Let it be freely granted that Hauptmann is a greater man that Sudermann and that Clyde Fitch is not for a moment to be compared with Barrie, or Galsworthy or Shaw. Neither Sudermann nor Fitch are profound thinkers, but they are master playwrights for all that, and have had a powerful effect in raising the level of dramatic productions in their own countries. Sudermann's *Die Ehre* started an epoch in modern German drama; and in our modern American drama Clyde Fitch still holds the largest place, and is our greatest single benefactor. He was always serious, if his plays were not; he never left anything to chance, and followed his calling with a devotion that cost him his health and life. After the success of *The Climbers,* managers wisely left

details of production to him. When a new play was accepted, he chose the cast and conducted all rehearsals as an absolute dictator. He told the actresses what clothes they should wear—one of them, he said to me, burst into tears when he would not permit her to wear the gown she had selected. These are small details, perhaps, but I mention them as showing how completely he was a man of the theatre, and how he regarded nothing as unimportant. When a new author writes a play, the audience are unaware of what has been "done to it"; I remember on the first night of a production from an obscure writer, the author was called before the curtain, and made this speech: "Ladies and gentlemen, I want you all to know that there is one line in this play I wrote myself." All the works of Clyde Fitch after the beginning of the twentieth century were his own—in composition and in presentation.

What we in America must hope for now is a dramatist, who, with all of Fitch's technique, knowledge of the stage, cleverness in dialogue, and devotion to the theatre, can give us truly great plays; no such person has yet appeared.

No play of universal importance has ever been written in the Western Hemisphere. Yet we have some original twentieth century dramas that stand out above the average production. Our foremost living dramatist is Augustus Thomas; and his best piece, *The Witching Hour,* is excellent both in action and dialogue. I know, because I have heard it on the stage, and seen it in the motion pictures. The late William Vaughn Moody contributed to literature and the theatre in *The Great Divide.* Eugene Walter has never realised his possibilities; but *The Easiest Way* was certainly not lacking either in force or in truth. Louis K. Anspacher's *The Unchastened Woman* is a brilliant and original comedy, and will repay study in the printed text. Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon* deservedly won a prize, but it has more promise than excellence. Jesse Lynch Williams understands the art of dialogue, but has not yet produced a wholly convincing play. The best one-act piece that I know of by an American writer is the tragedy, *Trifles,* by Susan Glaspell. This indicates a high-power pen. It has a Russian intensity. Our most successful living novelist, Booth

Tarkington, has lately devoted himself in all seriousness to the drama, and I have high hopes. His earlier pieces, written in collaboration, were only sugar-plums; but *Clarence* is an exceedingly clever comedy, and *Poldekin,* although it received a chorus of damnation from the New York papers, is a living proof that the limitations imposed on Mr. Tarkington's art by the critics, must be removed. His next play may surprise his friends and disturb his foes.

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

In the late afternoon of a typical winter day in Paris, 14 December 1903, and in response to a cordial invitation giving the time and the place, I walked through the cold drizzle up on the heights not so far from the Trocadéro, entered the long crooked rue Raynouard, came to an opaque portal in an opaque wall, made out in the dimness the number 67, rang a bell, and awaited the result of the tintinnabulation—which went echoing off in the remote interior—with an accelerated heart. Soon I followed a maid-servant through long passages and reverberating corridors—just as if we were characters in one of the plays—until after an incredibly long and winding pilgrimage, the maid stopped in front of a door and knocked. A clear voice called "*Entrez!*" and I did.

A cheerful contrast it was to all I had seen outside of it. It was a rather small square room; a sea-coal fire was blazing merrily in the open grate; the walls were lined with

books; a table was in the middle of the room, a comfortable chair placed at it, while directly behind the chair, so that the writer could reach these particular books without getting up, was a set of the Mermaid Series of the Elizabethan Dramatists, besides many other volumes in the English language. The chair at the desk faced the door, and as I entered, I saw the man in the chair busily writing in the old-fashioned way, with pen and ink. He looked up with a hospitable expression, immediately rose, shook hands warmly, and offered me a cigarette. I lit it, and was so confused that I put the wrong end in my mouth. This seemed to amuse M. Maeterlinck extremely; in fact, he roared with laughter. I laughed to keep him company, and at once we seemed to be intimate. The famous mystic was in appearance the opposite of what many must have imagined. Although his works are full of spiritual significance, full of symbolism and the stuff that dreams are made of, the best adjective to describe the man is *hearty*. It was a handsome, healthy face, manly and cheerful in expression; he looked as rugged as an English squire, and as though he had been brought up

on beef steak and Bass's ale. He had positively no mannerisms, no affectations; he seemed composed of cordiality and good sense.

I knew that for years he had read English with the same ease that he read French; I therefore expected the conversation would be in my own tongue. But I had no chance to discover how good his spoken English might be, for he insisted—perhaps out of politeness—that we should both speak French. I was consoled by the fact that the distance between his oral French and mine could not possibly be greater than that between his written French and my written English; and for an hour we talked freely, "une heure amicale," he was kind enough to call it afterwards. He spoke of his immense admiration for English literature, for English poets, English dramatists, and, among American authors, for Emerson. He confirmed all that he had written me about his love for Browning. I reminded him of his early translation of the Elizabethan Ford's tragedy, *'Tis Pity,* and he smiled, saying it was a work of his youth. I told him of my difficulties in finding a copy in Paris, and of my pleasure in finally adding it

to my collection. We spoke a good deal about his play *Monna Vanna,* and when I said I should hear it next month in Munich, he looked distressed, saying that the Munich performance was bad—later I thought it was good. It certainly gives one a notion of the standards that prevail at Paris when I say that of all the months I have spent in Paris in the twentieth century, never at any time during my visits to that city has there been a single one of Maeterlinck's plays on the stage. I can judge of the acting qualities of his drama only through English and German.

As I rose to go, he gave me an autograph copy of his translation of the work of a Flemish mystic. I went straight from his house to the Comédie Française, where I heard a performance of Victor Hugo's *Hernani.* It was of course admirably produced and interpreted, but its declamation sounded so unreal and its sentiments so melodramatic that many in the audience laughed outright.

When Maeterlinck visited America for the first time in 1919, I found him the same man —frank, hearty, modest and sincere. The brilliant successes of plays written since 1903 had not changed his personal manner.

It is a pity that his unfortunate lecture tour produced such a false impression of him in our country. He used a language on that opening night that had never been heard from gods or men. I told him it was really a great compliment to us. All his works written in French had been original; no one could foretell the characteristics of his next book. And so, when he came to America, he not only wrote an original lecture but invented an original language, that was used just once—like a goblet for the king's health —and will never be used again.

My acquaintance with the famous Belgian in 1903 began in a way that is of some literary interest. As every one knows, *Monna Vanna,* published in 1902, was a turning point in Maeterlinck's career. Up to that date, and for a little over ten years, he had written "literary" dramas, that appealed only to readers; he was scarcely thought of as a practical playwright. But *Monna Vanna* was a success—as it deserved to be—on every stage in Europe except in England, where it was forbidden by the censor; the world was talking about it. One day, in the quiet of my library, I began to read it, and

when I was part way through the second act, I leaped from my chair—the thing seemed incredible, but here was a scene that must have been taken straight from Browning's drama *Luria*. I say it seemed incredible that Maeterlinck could have conveyed anything from this almost-forgotten work of Browning, and yet it was even more incredible that such a psychological situation should have happened twice by accident. The fact that both *Monna Vanna* and *Luria* represented hostilities between Florence and Pisa in the fifteenth century, the fact that the general of the Florentine forces was an alien—that was not so remarkable and might have been fortuitous. But that in both plays the Commissary of the Republic of Florence, in the camp with the Commander-in-chief, should be steadily betraying him in letters home; and that when the general, in a man-to-man interview, spoke of the discovery of this abominable treachery, the culprit, instead of being ashamed, embarrassed or apologetic, boldly defended his course, saying that Florence was greater than any man who worked for her, and that if the general punished the Commissary for this so-called treachery, he would simply be

proving the correctness of the Commissary's attitude—how could this be an accident? Such original pyschology is purely in the manner of Browning, and to see it repeated literally in *Monna Vanna* was amazing. Of course it was a side-issue in the French play; it had nothing to do with the main plot or the main interest, and the drama could have stood perfectly well without it. However, there it was!

I waited for some one to speak. I read many criticisms of *Monna Vanna;* no one mentioned this similarity, either in England or in America. I therefore published an article in the New York *Independent,* calling attention to the parallel, but of course not suggesting plagiarism. Immediately I received condemnation and ridicule. If only these hostile critics had taken the trouble to read *Luria;* but *Luria* was a play that had been published in 1846, had never attracted attention—had never been played in any country or at any time except just once at the Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut—had in short been forgotten even by students of English literature, even by students of Browning. This

latter fact is clear from the position taken by James Huneker, who, in *Steeplejack,* informs us that he reads Browning chronically. In 1903 Mr. Huneker was dramatic critic for the New York *Sun;* he ridiculed my pretended discovery. Later in the year, however, he went to Paris, called on Maeterlinck, and the Belgian told him I was right and he was wrong. He then wrote me a handsome letter, stating exactly what Maeterlinck had said.

Wishing only to arrive at the truth, for Browning and Maeterlinck are both of such importance in literature that an established connexion would be interesting, I sent the *Independent* article to the author of *Monna Vanna,* and received an immediate reply.

"22 March, 1903.

"I have just read with interest, in *The Independent,* the article that you have devoted to *Monna Vanna.* You are absolutely right (*vous avez parfaitement raison*): there is, between an episodiacal scene in my second act (where Prinzivalle unmasks Trivulzio) and one of the great scenes in *Luria* a similarity that I am surprised has not been noticed before. I am all the more surprised, because,

far from concealing this similarity, I tried myself to emphasise it, in taking exactly the same hostile cities, the same epoch, and almost the same characters: when it would have been easy to transpose the whole thing and make the borrowing unrecognisable, had I wished to deceive.

"I am an eager reader and an ardent admirer of Browning, who is in my opinion one of the greatest poets that England has ever had. This is why I regard him as belonging to classic and universal literature, which everybody is supposed to know. It is then natural and legitimate to borrow a situation or rather a fragment of a situation, just as one borrows daily from Æschylus, Sophocles, and Shakespeare. Such borrowings, when they are concerned with poets of this rank, and are so to speak, *coram publico,* are really a kind of public homage.

"Then, apart from this episode, which fills a corner so accidental and so subordinate that one might entirely suppress it without in the least injuring my play, my piece separates itself entirely from the tragedy of Browning and has nothing more in common with it. This scene rises in my drama like

an isolated column that my pious homage has erected to the memory of the poet who created in my imagination the atmosphere where Monna Vanna lives, to the memory of a Master admired by all."

This letter was not only cheering to me, but I think it is important to students of literature; and let me repeat that Maeterlinck is accurate in saying that the main plot of *Monna Vanna* owes nothing to *Luria*. I wrote, asking permission to print the letter, and received the following reply.

"12 May, 1903.

"I am very grateful for your cordial and very correct attitude in this little literary controversy and I thank you heartily. I do not recall the precise words of my former letter, but as I wrote simply a fact that I wanted to express, I see no reason why it should not be published exactly as I wrote it. Only I think I remember saying that the scene between Prinzivalle and Trivulzio had been *borrowed* from Browning. It would be more exact to say that it had been *inspired* by the reading of *Luria*. So, as another ex-

ample, has my new piece, *Joyzelle,* been inspired by *The Tempest* of Shakespeare. If it seems natural to seek a point of departure and a motive of inspiration in Shakespeare, why should one be astonished if it is sought in Browning?"

In my judgment, Maeterlinck does not exaggerate the greatness of Browning; but it is certainly true that Browning is not universally read in France, although Professor Berger has written a volume devoted to him, and M. Jusserand, the French Ambassador to the United States, who knew Browning personally, long ago called attention to the Englishman's genius. I once spoke to Emile Faguet about Maeterlinck's enthusiasm for Browning, and asked him if Browning were a household word in France. He smiled and said, "*Pas encore.*"

It is interesting to record the relationship between *Luria* and *Monna Vanna,* but much more interesting to know of M. Maeterlinck's admiration for Browning. For the conception of Love which is primary in Browning's work, is prominent not only in *Monna Vanna* and *Joyzelle,* but certainly in such a play as

Soeur Béatrice, and in fact is essential to an understanding of Maeterlinck's ideas.

Maeterlinck is one of the great dramatists of modern times, and is perhaps, if we consider both the excellence of his work and its universal influence, the foremost living writer in the world. Although practically all of his work is in prose, he is commonly spoken of as a poet—an unconscious recognition of the spirit and quality of his writings—and he used to be called the Belgian Shakespeare. He has modestly insisted that the late Emile Verhaeren, the Belgian poet and dramatist, is a more important figure in literature than himself; but he can get no one to agree with him. During the war there was talk of electing Maeterlinck to the French Academy, despite his foreign birth and citizenship; in a letter to *Le Journal,* he suggested that they choose instead "my old friend Emile Verhaeren, first, because he is my elder; second, because he is a very great poet, while I am only an industrious and conscientious prose writer. Any one with patience could write what I have written; nobody could do what he has done. Only a poet is qualified to

represent worthily a nation's greatness and heroism."

Patience is an admirable quality; but uncommon as it is, it is more common than genius. Nor is it a particular qualification for producing literature. Browning and Byron were not conspicuous for possessing patience.

Good news was brought to Ghent on 29 August 1862, for on that day and in that place Maurice Maeterlinck was born. He came of a very old Flemish family—he had the mediæval mystics in his blood. . . . He took the regular course at the Jesuit College of Sainte-Barbe, in Ghent. These early religious impressions were lasting, for though it cannot be said that Maeterlinck is either an orthodox Catholic or Protestant, he is a life-long student of religion, and not from an aloof standpoint. He is a religious man, and ethical ideas have formed the foundation of much of his work. After graduating from this college in 1885, he took up the study of law at the University of Ghent. But he cared much for literature and little for law.

M. Tourquet-Milnes informs us that the

first thing written by Maeterlinck that got into print was *The Massacre of the Innocents.* The scene is in Nazareth and we are told that it is painfully detailed and realistic. It is interesting to see that in common with all great writers, his main inspiration is the Bible; its pages were to have a powerful influence on his mature prose style, and he was later to write a play on Mary Magdalene.

After this prose sketch, came what is generally called Maeterlinck's first publication (really his second), a volume of poems named *Hot-Houses* (*Serres Chaudes*). This thin book is full of vaguely melancholy verse; quite different in appearance are these forced flowers from those of *The Double Garden.*

Serres Chaudes appeared in 1889; and three years before, in 1886, Maeterlinck realised a dream of his boyhood—he saw Paris for the first time. I am quite sure that no American and no Frenchman can share or even adequately imagine the sensations of an ambitious Belgian when he first comes to Paris. Maeterlinck was twenty-four; so far as polite intercourse and writing had been concerned, French was his mother-tongue;

yet he had never seen Paris nor heard Parisians talking together. His attitude toward the centre of French art and literature must have been entirely different from that of a southern Frenchman like Alphonse Daudet or from an Englishman who had learned the language in his youth.

English literature is diffused all over the world; it can never be centralised again as it was at London in the days of Samuel Johnson. But French literature is still centralised at Paris; and as young Maeterlinck saw the world-famous poets and novelists walking the streets, and lingered in the Bohemian cafés listening to manuscript verse from youthful enthusiasts, we can hardly guess his excitement and the spur to his literary ambition. "Very often," he once said to the journalist, Jules Huret, "I saw Villiers de l'Isle Adam. It was at the Brasserie Pousset in Montmartre. There were others too: Mendès came in occasionally."

After some months in the French capital, he returned to Belgium and lived in solitude and calm—that expectant calm that hovers over the landscape of the Low Countries—that Silence which was to be characteristic

of his early dramas. This period of prolonged and uninterrupted meditation, study, reflection, and composition was important to his future development.

His reputation bloomed in the same year that saw the publication of *Serres Chaudes,* though not by that work; for in 1889—the year of the first play by Hauptmann and the first by Sudermann—Maeterlinck produced *La Princesse Maleine,* a tragedy in five acts. Octave Mirbeau, who was later to become a famous dramatist, and who was then a journalist, greeted the unknown Belgian with this rhapsody, printed in *Figaro,* 24 August 1890. "I know nothing whatever of M. Maurice Maeterlinck. I don't know where he comes from or anything about his present condition. I don't know whether he is old or young, rich or poor. I only know that no man is more unknown than he; and I know also that he has produced a masterpiece, not indeed a masterpiece so labeled in advance, such as our young poets publish every day, sung on every note in their yelping lyre, or rather on the contemporary yelping flute; but an admirable and pure eternal masterpiece, a masterpiece which is enough to immortalise a name and

to make this name blessed by all who hunger for the lofty and the beautiful; a masterpiece, such as all honest and struggling artists, sometimes, in their moments of enthusiasm, have dreamed of writing and such as no one of them has written until now. In short, M. Maeterlinck has given us a work the most full of genius of any of our time, and also the most extrarodinary and the most simple, comparable—shall I dare to say?—superior in beauty to what is most beautiful in Shakespeare. This work is called *La Princesse Maleine.* Are there twenty persons living who have heard of it? I think not."

This is the beginning of the echoing cry, The Belgian Shakespeare. Now it is easy enough to laugh at this rhapsody, as many have done; but Mirbeau was not so far from the truth. Certainly the world has not placed Maeterlinck above Shakespeare; certainly *La Princesse Maleine* in itself does not and did not deserve such extravagant praise. But the most important thing to remember is that Octave Mirbeau recognised the genius in this play at a time when the author was unknown; and Mirbeau was right in his wild enthusiasm, for Maeterlinck, although no one

but Mirbeau suspected it, was to be accepted as one of the great writers of the world.

It is not only remarkable that Maeterlinck's genius should have been recognised just as it rose on the horizon of letters; it is even more remarkable that the lookout who saw it was Octave Mirbeau. This hard-headed, windbitten Norman radical, who hated mystery and sentiment and romance and illusion, who was later to write one of the best realistic plays of his time, was the one man in France who saluted the poet of dreams.

Mirbeau's voice did not carry far in those days, and his enthusiasm caused only a local flurry; though what the feelings of the young Belgian were can only be dimly imagined. Maeterlinck was not really universally known until his play *The Blind—Les Aveugles*— was produced by Lugné Poë on 7 December 1891. Of course the play had no "run," but it made a sensation, and I remember reading in the American papers an account of the strange piece with an analysis of the plot.

The next time Maeterlinck appeared in the American press was through a *succès de*

scandale. He had translated the decadent but powerful Elizabethan tragedy by John Ford, *'Tis Pity,* for the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, in 1895. It will be remembered that in this drama a brother is in love with his sister; he stabs her, cuts out her heart with his dagger, and with the bleeding heart poised on the point of the blade, rushes into a dining-room where a fashionable dinner is in progress. The New York *World,* which can hardly be blamed for not knowing much at that time about the Belgian, called him Maeckirling; the news item said, "Paris has been shocked. This difficult feat has been accomplished by a writer named Maeckirling." The report went on to say that on the first night a fresh sheep's heart had been used, but so many ladies in the audience and on the stage fainted, that in subsequent performances a flannel heart had been substituted.

Years later a professor in an Eastern college in America asked his class if they knew who Maeterlinck was, and one youth volunteered confidently this information. "He is the king of Abyssinia."

As soon as Maeterlinck became known in America, parodies and burlesques began to

appear. This was inevitable—it had happened to Ibsen, Browning, Henry James, and to all authors whose plain, definite meanings do not float on the surface of the printed page. The peculiar style of the Belgian,—simple naïve language that nevertheless was incomprehensible, all the more maddening because apparently so elementary, the constant repetitions, the apparent *non-sequiturs,* made him a mark for journalistic humour. And indeed it would be difficult to write a burlesque of *The Seven Princesses,* his most opaque and least important work. I attended an amateur performance of that play, where at first the audience endeavoured to listen respectfully; but soon the dialogue made that impossible; restrained gayety finally gave way to roaring mirth; the audience lost all shame, and the questions and replies were greeted by whoops and howls and shrieks of laughter; nor were we trying to make any hostile or burlesque demonstration; we were in such hysterical, uncontrollable pleasure-pain that it was dangerous to health; as I look back on that memorable evening, I think it was the funniest "show" I ever saw.

Yet it is the "difficult" authors that hold the highest place in critical esteem. Ibsen's *Master Builder* is called a work of genius, although no one has ever been able to demonstrate what it means; the fame of Henry James grows brighter every year. The common people may be grateful to an author's amenity, but the more discriminating readers will never place Longfellow above Browning. Indeed there is danger that Longfellow will not receive half his due. It takes courage to confess that one enjoys reading him. The mystery of Maeterlinck's final intention adds something to his stature, as a figure looks larger in a fog.

There are two good reasons, among others, for this. One is, that a writer who is not transparently clear, offers a challenge in every work, sometimes on every page. And while we love to have our curiosity satisfied by a poem or a play or a novel there is something we love even more; to have it aroused. The unfathomable works of art are also superior to the lucid ones in this—they are more like life. For Life is a greater mystery than anything written about it. I suppose this is one reason why novelists who use

"local colour" are admired least of all in the locality they describe. The people who live there know they are not like that; the story has a plot and their lives have none. You might as well attempt to stop the course of a river while you describe it; or to represent the sky on a fair-and-foul day in April by a geometrical diagram.

It is inevitable that Maeterlinck should have been labeled; a label is like a proverb or a catch-phrase, it saves expense of thought. Thus, Maeterlinck's plays were called symbolistic, static, and so on. Like all artists he felt the same objection to classification that the subjects of art themselves feel. In a letter to Mr. Barrett Clark, cited in the latter's valuable book, *The Continental Drama of To-day* (1914), Maeterlinck wrote, "You must not attach too great importance to the expression 'Static'; it was an invention, a theory of my youth, worth what most literary theories are worth,—that is, almost nothing. Whether a play be *static,* or *dynamic, symbolistic* or *realistic,* is of little consequence. What matters is that it be well written, well thought out, human and, if possible, super-

human, in the deepest significance of the term."

That it be superhuman is not only a favourite idea of the Belgian author, it was realised in all his best plays except *Monna Vanna.* Every work of talent has three dimensions, length, breadth, depth—and if it be a work of genius, (which includes talent) then it invariably has the fourth dimension, as shown by the plays of Ibsen. For example, *Pélléas and Mélisande,* reduced to its lowest terms, is the familiar tragedy (Paolo and Francesca) of a young and beautiful woman married to an old, ugly, uninteresting husband, and allowed frequent conversation with the husband's young, and brilliant brother. The same result invariably happens, although not always the same consequences. You have love, conscience, loyalty, treachery, jealousy, murder, remorse—surely the ingredients of tragedy. But over all this Maeterlinck throws a veil through which we see these lovers struggling helplessly like children in the night; and for the time all human life seems surrounded by impenetrable forests in which the children are lost,

because we have no map and no guide. The little group of sufferers, who suffer horribly, represent humanity. We feel the "encircling gloom."

In the preface to the three volume edition of his plays, published in 1902, and which is essential to a comprehension of the earlier dramas, Maeterlinck wrote, "Great poetry, looked at closely, is composed of three principal elements; first the beauty of language, then passionate contemplation and painting of that which really exists around us and in us, that is to say, nature and our sentiments, and finally, enveloping the entire work and creating its special atmosphere, the idea which the poet makes for himself of the unknown in which float the beings and the things which he creates, of the mystery which controls them and judges them and which presides over their destinies. I am certain that this last element is the most important. Observe a beautiful poem, no matter how brief or fugitive. Rarely do its beauty and grandeur confine themselves to the things we actually know. Nine out of ten times its greatness depends on an allusion to the mysteries, to human destiny, to some new bond between

the visible and the invisible, the temporal and the eternal." Later, he uses as illustrations of realistic plays that are surrounded by an atmosphere of vast forces, Tolstoi's *Power of Darkness* and Ibsen's *Ghosts.* "In these two dramas superior powers intervene that we all feel pressing on our lives."

Thus it is clear that Maeterlinck is not content with representing various individuals in action, the common spectacle on the stage; he will have these figures, but above all he wishes to suggest to the audience and to the reader in even greater emphasis the surrounding mystery that controls both them and us. So it is absurd to demand an explanation of every "symbol" in *Pélléas and Mélisande;* the episode of the ring was an inspiration of genius, and tells more than pages of talk.

The love of "silence" in Maeterlinck's plays, the suggestion of meaning by pauses and immobility, so characteristic of *Les Aveugles, L'Intruse,* and *Intérieur,* arises, I think, from that overwhelming desire in every artist for some better means of communication than spoken words. It is only the unthinking and the inartistic and the un-

imaginative that find human speech a satisfactory method of communicating ideas and intentions; perhaps it is adequate to the ideas and intentions that such people employ; as some poems are clear because they are shallow. Browning, who had a wide vocabulary and unusual power of expression, frequently cried out against the inadequacy of words as a vehicle of thought. He believed that in the next world we should have some better method.

> Not so! Expect nor question nor reply
> At what we figure as God's judgment-bar!
> None of this vile way by the barren words
> Which, more than any deed, characterise
> Man as made subject to a curse; no speech—

And the intention of Maeterlinck's dramas Browning expressed in the closing lines of *The Ring and the Book.*

> Art may tell a truth
> Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought,
> Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.
> So may you paint your picture, twice show truth,
> Beyond mere imagery on the wall,—
> So, note by note, bring music from your mind,
> Deeper than ever e'en Beethoven dived.

Some tragedies are tragedies of surprise, like *The Return of the Druses,* which has the most unexpected and overwhelming climax that I remember anywhere in drama; others are tragedies of suspense. The method in each naturally corresponds somewhat to the terms dynamic and static. Maeterlinck is a master of suspense; the situation is hopeless from the start; the atmosphere is charged with disaster, as swollen clouds are charged with rain; the blow will fall, its horror augmented by suspense. Like Ibsen's tragedies, they are all composed of falling action; and the dialogues of both Maeterlinck and Ibsen have this in common; the language is so extremely simple, the sentences are so short, the brief questions are so frequent, that so far as language goes, their works may be confidently recommended to beginners in French and Norwegian. Yet although the words are "easy," their significance is obscure. The dictionary does not help.

The tragic element in suspense is heightened by the simplicity of the language and by the constant antiphony of question and answer. How frequently something like this happens in Ibsen: (I am not quoting):

A. I have been very sad this year.
B. You have been sad?
A. Yes, I have been sad. It was the blow.
B. The blow?
A. Yes, my father died.
B. Ah, I remember hearing of it. It must have been a blow to you.
A. But that was not the *real* blow.
B. That was not the *real* blow?
A. No, there was something worse than that.

Maeterlinck often places his characters on one side of a closed door—always a good "symbol." Thus, from his first play, *La Princesse Maleine:* A dog is scratching at a door.

La Nourrice. Il gratte, il gratte, il renifle.
Hjalmar. Il flaire quelque chose sous la porte.
La Nourrice. Il doit y avoir quelque chose. . . .
Hjalmar. Allez voir . . .
La Nourrice. La chambre est fermée; je n'ai pas la clef.
Hjalmar. Qui est-ce qui a la clef?
La Nourrice. La reine Anne.
Hjalmar. Pourquoi a-t-elle la clef?
La Nourrice. Je n'en sais rien.

I agree with Ludwig Lewisohn that the best among the early works is not *Pélléas and Mélisande,* but the three short plays, *L'In-*

truse, Les Aveugles, Intérieur. These are original, are the most economical in the use of symbolism and suspense, and because of that very fact make by these elements a tremendous impression. These dramas may be dreams, but one cannot shake them off.

The static quality in the plays written before *Monna Vanna* (1902) is best interpreted in Maeterlinck's own words, which are frequently quoted. I take the citation in English from Barrett Clark: "I have grown to believe that an old man, seated in his armchair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him; giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws that reign about his house, interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of doors and windows and the quivering voice of the light, submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny—an old man who conceives not that all the powers of this world, like so many heedful servants, are mingling and keeping vigil in his room, who suspects not that the very sun itself is supporting in space the little table against which he leans, or that every star in heaven and every fibre of the soul are directly concerned in the movement of an eye-

lid that closes, or a thought that springs to birth—I have grown to believe that he, motionless as he is, does yet live in reality a deeper, more human, and more universal, life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who conquers in battle, or 'the husband who avenges his honour.' "

The intimacy of silence is naturally the most difficult of all things to represent on the stage. Yet in real life silence is often the best means of communication between those whose affection is sincere and deep. Love, and even friendship, will annihilate formality; it is only between new or rarely-meeting acquaintances that a constant flow of conversation must be maintained. Carlyle and Tennyson both agreed that the best evening they ever spent together was when they sat voiceless for hours, opening their mouths only to exhale tobacco-smoke; they knew each other so perfectly that they were in absolute harmony; somehow their thoughts traveled from one to the other through the smoky fragrance more swiftly and more clearly than through the medium of words. Mr. Howells said that he and Mark Twain once entered the smoking compartment of a train at Hart-

ford, sat directly facing each other for three hours, and neither spoke a word until they entered the station at New York. Mr. Howells did not have the power of expression through nicotine; but both friends felt no embarrassment, and enjoyed the journey together.

This would be static drama if represented on the stage—and something akin to this is actually accomplished in the plays of Maeterlinck. It is communication through silence —not necessarily between human beings— but between a human being and surrounding imponderable forces.

The "obscurity" of Maeterlinck is unlike the obscurity of those authors whose language is clumsy or involved; his obscurity arises from the fact that he is an individual constantly oppressed by the environment of vast mysteries; and in the simple language of his plays he is forever trying to give to the reader or the spectator that double sense of infinite distance and close imprisonment.

A drama that is usually passed over in discussion of his work, I believe to be one of his most beautiful, most important, and therefore most lasting—*Sister Beatrice.*

This was written in 1901, and came just before that definite change in his manner which was marked the next year by *Monna Vanna.* In *Soeur Béatrice* we have a masterpiece both in literature and on the stage. Yet he himself dismisses it as a trifle. Of all the mysterious and unfathomable passages in his writings, I find the plain prose of this preface, so far as it deals with this particular play, the most impenetrable.

"As to the two little pieces . . . *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue, ou la délivrance inutile,* and *Soeur Béatrice,* I should like to have no misunderstanding. It is not because they come later in my career that one should search for an evolution or a new desire. They are, to speak accurately, little stage-plays, short poems of a kind called wrongly enough 'opéra-comique,' destined to furnish to musicians who asked for them a theme convenient for musical development. They mean nothing more than that, and people will entirely mistake my intentions if they try to find great moral or philosophical hidden meanings."

It is inconceivable that Maeterlinck could write so powerful and affecting a play as

Soeur Béatrice merely as a libretto. It is true that most of his plays naturally lend themselves to music; I think the opera *Pélléas and Mélisande* is more beautiful and somehow more "natural" than the play; and *Monna Vanna* is a steady success on the operatic stage, (though *The Blue Bird* was a failure); but *Soeur Béatrice* is one of the best acting plays of the twentieth century, and is almost equally effective in the library. I shall never forget the performance I saw in Germany in 1904, when the drama was given by the combined forces of the Neues and Kleines Theater from Berlin; and almost as great an effect was produced in America by the New Theatre company, with that remarkable interpreter of poetry and passion, Edith Wynne Mathison. When a fine artist, the late Madame Komisarshevskaia, came to America from Russia, I asked her what was her favourite rôle in all modern drama, and she replied without a moment's hesitation, *Soeur Béatrice*. She had fully intended to produce it in New York, and was forbidden to do so by our monopoly system, something, that with all her keenness and quickness of intelligence, was beyond her comprehension.

The story of *Sister Beatrice* is taken from an old miracle, where the Holy Virgin takes the place of an absent nun; and there are versions of it in many languages. I remember years ago reading the Bohemian romance, *Amis and Amil,* by Julius Zeyer, and finding the story there. "The holy statue had disappeared. . . . In this moment, however, the door of the sleeping-chamber opened wide of itself, a blinding light filled the passage, a sweet perfume in white clouds came from the room . . . and on the threshold appeared the holy statue. The mysterious veil, which quite concealed the forehead, moved as under the breath of a soft breeze, and out of the shimmering folds fell white sweet-smelling flowers like snowflakes. Quietly the statue took its place on the golden throne." [1]

It is worth recording that a number of years ago *Sister Beatrice* was given for the first time in America under the auspices of the Chicago Woman's Club, and made an in-

[1] Maeterlinck's play reawakened interest in the beautiful old fable, and those who are interested may read a treatise on the subject published in 1904: *Die Geschichte der Marienlegende von Beatrix der Kuesterin.* By H. Watenphul.

effaceable impression on those who saw it. The critics were rather surprised at its stage value.

Not only is this one of the best of Maeterlinck's plays for representation, provided always the setting and actors are adequate, but, despite his disclaimer, it comes as near as any other of his dramas to expressing his philosophy—which may be summed up in the one word Love. In *Sister Beatrice, Monna Vanna, Joyzelle, Mary Magdalene, The Blue Bird, The Betrothal,* Love is the fulfillment of the law—the final philosophy and religion. It is in this aspect of his work that Maeterlinck comes closest to Browning; for the English poet would have delighted in the story of the Virgin and in the sacrifice made by Monna Vanna. Technically the holy nun was both unchaste and disloyal; but according to Maeterlinck she followed single-hearted the call of love; in her absence therefore her place was taken by the infinitely comprehending Blessed Virgin, and on her return, though she comes in rags, broken in health, and tortured by conscience, she is received into glory. Her sins are forgiven: for she loved

much. I wish Browning had made one of his dramatic monologues or romances out of this legend.

There is, as every one has noticed, a definite turning point in Maeterlinck's career, signified by the production of *Monna Vanna* in 1902. Up to this time he had been a "literary" dramatist, enjoying a reputation as a man of letters and a philosopher, but not regarded as a practical playwright. But *Monna Vanna* was and is a brilliant stage play, full of contrasts, full of conflict, full of passion, and ending with a marvellous opportunity for the actress. No wonder that its success has always been associated with some woman; for the man who takes the part of Prinzivalle has the thankless and difficult task of remaining on the stage during the third act without saying a word. Like a cinema actor, whose happiness and life are at stake, he must continually "register" emotion.

Two problems interested Maeterlinck in this play. Can a woman be physically dishonoured and yet spiritually pure? Should a woman sacrifice her "honour" for her country or for the welfare of others, as boldly as she would sacrifice her life? To both of these

questions the dramatist gives an unqualified affirmative; in fact, he reëmphasises the first in *Joyzelle.*

Thomas Hardy wrote a long and powerful novel to prove the first paradox, for Tess, according to her creator, is "a pure woman faithfully presented." It was the treatment of the second question which aroused sharp discussion, not only between Monna's husband and his father, but in the audiences; and which led to the English censor's prohibition. Such a case as Maeterlinck brings up is artificial or at all events unlikely; but he was interested I think in the philosophy of love. If it is right to give our lives for our country, why should it not be right to sacrifice one's honour for one's country? Well, so far as men are concerned, the answer has always been and is now affirmative. As a woman's honour is her virtue, so a man's honour is his honesty. In times of war not only do millions give their lives for their country, but the highest, noblest, most patriotic service of all is performed by the spy, who sacrifices his oath, his word of honour, his truthfulness, everything he holds most dear—this is really the "supreme sacrifice."

How he must envy the men in the casualty list!

Maeterlinck applies this same supreme sacrifice to woman. It is possible that he was thinking of that great scene in *A Doll's House,* where the husband says to the wife, "I would gladly work for you day and night, Nora—bear sorrow and want for your sake—but no man sacrifices his honour, even for one he loves." To which Nora replies, "Millions of women have done so." The husband of Nora and the husband of Monna Vanna are alike in being colossally selfish; for in each instance the man was thinking of *his* honour, of *his* loss—not at all of his wife's suffering. And in each instance the case is made as difficult as possible by the dramatist, in order to underline his point. The natural result is that thousands of men sympathise with the two husbands, and think their anger quite justified. But whatever the individual difficulty, and Monna Vanna's husband can hardly be expected to view the situation with enthusiasm, the Norwegian and the Belgian were both trying to teach the supremacy of Love. Love sticks at nothing and knows no barriers.

Observe how in both these plays it is the last act that reveals male selfishness. Whatever sympathy we may have had with the man in the earlier scenes, he himself, by his selfish egotism, alienates us in the end, even as he slays love in his wife's heart. Had Guido or Helmer known what love was, they would have seen and have understood. For Love is only sand-blind; selfishness, egotism, conceit are in the dark.

Whether Monna Vanna was right or wrong, her decision was a test of her husband's character; and Browning tells us that even a crime may be a test of virtue.

The meaning of *Monna Vanna* ought to be transparently clear, for in this play the author emerged from the veil of symbolism. Yet many have misunderstood it. In two letters to two enquirers, Maeterlinck said that Monna Vanna is a true heroine, and old Marco the inspiring genius—he represents the final wisdom of life, having lived long and learned much. Monna Vanna sympathised keenly with her husband's agony in the first act, and still loved him; she would have continued to love him, even after the affecting interview with Prinzivalle; but his

stupidity and total lack of confidence in her and in her word finally open her eyes to his meanness. She strives no longer against her growing love for Prinzivalle, and will fly with him to some remote place, where if destiny permits, she will begin a new and happier life. In this explanation, Maeterlinck used almost the exact words of Ibsen: "she recognises that her marriage has been a lie."

The first performance of Maeterlinck's *Mary Magdalene* took place in the English language and on the New York stage; it happened at the New Theatre, 5 December 1910. There were three difficulties; the translation was not very good, the leading actress was miscast, and every one was reminded of Paul Heyse's play on the same theme, which had been powerfully interpreted in English by Mrs. Fiske. Two points were borrowed from Heyse; and when Maeterlinck wrote to the old German dramatist asking permission to use them, he was refused not only unequivocally but harshly. Then he determined to use them anyway, saying in his preface that one was taken from the New Testament and the other was common stage property—it was in fact the ethical

problem that we have already seen in *Monna Vanna* and in *Joyzelle*. It seemed at one time to obsess Maeterlinck.

Maeterlinck bought an old Norman Abbey near Rouen, where a performance of *Macbeth* attracted wide attention. It was in this romantic and inspiring Abbey of Saint Wandrille—which gave him even more inspiration than he could have hoped for—that he wrote *The Blue Bird* (which, by the way, never should be called in English *The Bluebird*). This carried his fame to the remotest parts of the earth, and unsupported, it is sufficient to carry his fame to remote generations. It is the crown of his life's work, summing up all his best qualities as poet, dramatist, playwright. His early dramas are a greater success in the library than on the stage; *Monna Vanna* is a greater success on the stage than in the library; *The Blue Bird* is equally great in both places—it is a masterpiece in literature and all-conquering in the theatre. It is an original and beautiful play; it is a distinct contribution to our present glorious age of drama.

When the author had it ready for the stage, he sent it to Mr. Stanislavski, the Director of

the Artistic Theatre at Moscow. It was played in the Russian language in the year 1908, and from that first night—the world's most exciting *première* since *Cyrano de Bergerac*—it traveled far and fast. It has been given at the Moscow theatre alone over three hundred times; when put on at London, 8 December 1909, it ran for over three hundred performances, the excitement being so intense that they were often forced to give twelve presentations every week; when it started the second season of the New Theatre in New York, 1 October 1910, it was the talk of the town.

Like *Peter Pan* it charmed both young and old. The delight of the children was audible at every performance; but the "deeper joys" of men and women were, if less vocal, even more in evidence. For just as in all his work, Maeterlinck's language is simple and his ideas complex, so *The Blue Bird* appeals to human beings at every stage in their journey.

The best account of the original Russian presentation may be found in Oliver M. Sayler's book, *The Russian Theatre and the Revolution* (1920). While people were being

shot down in the streets, and the spectators in the theatre had to dodge bullets on their homeward way, this lovely fairy tale captivated packed houses, just as it did during its first season, just as it will a hundred years from now. The company at the Artistic Theatre is the finest and best-drilled company of actors in the world; it was a notable compliment to give them *The Blue Bird,* but they were worthy of it. Mr. Sayler gives the speech of Director Stanislavski to his troupe, spoken before they began rehearsals.

"The production of *The Blue Bird* must be made with the purity and fantasy of a ten-year-old child. It must be naïve, simple, light, full of the joy of life, cheerful and imaginative like the sleep of a child; as beautiful as a child's dream and at the same time as majestic as the ideal of a poetic genius and thinker. Let *The Blue Bird* in our theatre thrill the grandchildren and arouse serious thoughts and deep feelings in their grandparents. Let the grandchildren on coming home from the theatre feel the joy of existence with which Tyltyl and Mytyl are possessed in the last act of the play. At the same time let their grandfathers and grand-

mothers once more before their impending death become inspired with the natural desire of man: to enjoy God's world and be glad that it is beautiful. . . . If man were always able to love, to understand, to delight in nature! If he contemplated more often, if he reflected on the mysteries of the world and took thought of the eternal! Then perhaps the Blue Bird would be flying freely among us. . . . [Can you imagine New York managers talking to New York actors like that?] In order to make the public listen to the fine shades of your feelings, you have to live them through yourself intensely. To live through definite intelligible feelings is easier than to live through the subtle soul vibrations of a poetic nature. To reach those experiences it is necessary to dig deep into the material which is handed to you for creation. To the study of the play we shall devote jointly a great deal of work and attention and love. But that is little. In addition, you have to prepare yourselves independently. I speak of your personal life observation which will broaden your imagination and sensitiveness. Make friends of children. Enter into their world. Watch

nature more and her manifestations surrounding us. Make friends of dogs and cats and look oftener into their eyes to see their souls. Thereby, you will be doing the same as Maeterlinck did before he wrote the play, and you will come closer to the author. . . . More than anything else, we must avoid theatricalness in the external presentation of *The Blue Bird,* as well as in the spiritual interpretation, for it might change the fairy dream of the poet into an ordinary extravaganza."

Although I would give much to see *The Blue Bird* in the Moscow Theatre, I do not believe the Russian Cat and Dog were any better than the American pair in 1910. The late Jacob Wendell, an actor who was steadily growing in authority, made the dog so real that many wept at his fidelity. Cecil Yapp was marvellous—his face, his agility, the way he paused in the midst of washing his cheek, his feline sneeze—he simply *was* the Cat. It is possible that his cat-life robbed him of something human; for though I have frequently seen him in other plays, he has never been so convincing as he was in *The Blue Bird.*

So far as *The Blue Bird* has any philosophy, it is pessimism; even in that amazingly beautiful scene—the best in the New York version—the Land of Memory, the pathos arises from the fact that the dead never live at all except when the living think of them; which makes the graveyard, with the exclamation *There are no Dead* seem as inconsistent as the scene showing that all individuals have a definite existence long before they are born. Furthermore, at the end of the play the Blue Bird disappears; nor did the children need to learn about it, because at the opening, their delight in the view of their rich neighbours' happiness is quite unshadowed by envy, a charming episode. But why look for logic in a work of art? or why cloud a thing of beauty by pointing out inconsistencies?

In the autumn of 1918, under the direction of Winthrop Ames, the first performance on any stage of *The Betrothal* took place in the English language and in New York. Observe again how slight is the connexion between the French theatre and the French plays of Maeterlinck. His motto for a *première* appears to be "Nowhere in France."

One cannot blame him, when one thinks of the conventional contemporary Parisian plays and audiences.

As it is more difficult to keep a reputation than to make one, so it has ever been more difficult to write a sequel than an initial masterpiece. *Vingt Ans Après* is a notable exception, the most notable of all being, as one of my undergraduate students suggested, the New Testament. But nearly all attempts to repeat share the fate of Tennyson's *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After, The Charge of the Heavy Brigade, The Death of Œnone;* Blackmore's *Slain by the Doones,* Barrie's *Tommy and Grizel,* and so on.

Therefore *The Betrothal* was an agreeable surprise. It naturally and inevitably lacked the novelty of *The Blue Bird,* but the inspiration was equally fresh and strong. The interest was steadily maintained, the successive scenes were both beautiful and captivating, and there was the same combination of fresh simplicity and far-reaching imagination. It was even more provocative to thought than *The Blue Bird,* presenting its ideas in a more aggressive and challenging way. The only thing that militates against the success of

The Betrothal is the enormous cost of the production; even with the theatre packed night after night, it did not meet expenses.

Although, here, as in *The Blue Bird,* happiness, if it exists anywhere, is to be found right at home—for the young man, after experimenting with many distant strangers, finally marries his little neighbour—the old bugbear Destiny has nothing to do with it. In the early scenes, Destiny is a colossal figure; he constantly becomes smaller, and finally he is no bigger than a doll, and is handled contemptuously by human beings. The Ancestors hold the trumps, and determine the young man's choice of his mate. They are a heterogeneous collection. After seeing this play, one might logically believe that The Blue Blood is as difficult to find as The Blue Bird.

Maeterlinck's war play, *A Burgomaster of Belgium,* was produced in New York in the spring of 1919, and while it was much better than most war plays, it will add little to Maeterlinck's reputation. The truly remarkable thing is Maeterlinck's aloofness. It was written during the darkest hours, by a man passionately devoted to his country and that

country Belgium; yet the presentation of characters and scenes was so objective that some idiots thought the piece was pro-German.

Maeterlinck has always been a greater writer than philosopher; a greater master of style than of thought. It is pathetic to think how eagerly his visit to America was awaited by those who thought he really had something new to tell them of the spirit world; some proof that this time should be positive. Alas, the only thing in his lecture that could be called new was his language, and that was even more unintelligible than the messages of ghosts. He himself was honest and candid; he gave us his own personal opinion, his impressions after considering various facts. Nor have I ever regarded him as a great Teacher, as so many seem to do. It is just as impossible to formulate a universal philosophy as it is to demonstrate the absolute truth of religion. Maeterlinck loves metaphysical speculation; he has studied and reflected much; he knows ancient writers, Flemish mystics, Carlyle and Emerson by heart. He observes life with the minuteness of the scientist and with the imagination of

the poet—men and women, animals and flowers. He has not only written about mediæval and modern heroes and heroines, he has written about dogs and bees. Even so, he is more Dreamer than Interpreter.

But although Maeterlinck is not a great teacher nor a great philosopher, he is a great writer, a great dramatist, a great Artist. The so-called "truths" of philosophy pass away, for they are often mere fashions of thought; every professional philosopher has them in his shop-window; sometimes they are garments covering lifeless blocks; you ask for an idea and you get a phrase; to-morrow the world will all be running after new phrases, which will then be as fashionable as the catch-words of to-day. But Beauty endures forever.

EDMOND ROSTAND

The twentieth century French Drama has been overrated. Critics speak of Hervieu, Capus, Donnay, Bataille, Lavedan and Bernstein as though they were not only clever play-makers, which they are, but as though they were thinkers and dramatists, which they are not. (Yet four in the list mentioned were elected to the French Academy.) They are all men of the theatre, but not men of ideas. If they had really followed the Leader, Henry Becque, they might have produced plays of permanent value; *Les Corbeaux* is worth their combined production. With a complete knowledge of the technique of construction, they chose to study "realism" rather than reality. With an empty, hollow formula, and only one theme—adultery—they gave to the French theatre a depressing monotony—for there is no monotony so depressing as the monotony of restlessness. They suggest constant activity with no vitality; they seem to be suffering

from nervous exhaustion. A character in a modern French play, significantly named *Les Marionettes,* makes a speech that must be echoed by many spectators; "The air we breathe here is bad. I need some rest, some solitude. And above all I should be glad if I could hear people talk about something besides love."

In spite of the towering reputation of these writers, they have not altogether escaped condemnation. Mr. Ashley Dukes, in his book, *Modern Dramatists,* speaking of Ibsen, says, "the playwrights of his day were living in an atmosphere of half-truths and shams, grubbing in the divorce court and living upon the maintenance of social intrigue just as comfortably as any bully upon the earnings of a prostitute." Later on, he remarks, "In order that the bankruptcy of modern French drama may be fully understood, it is only necessary to glance at the authors who hold the stage of present-day Paris (1911)."

At about the same time M. Paul Flat, in *Figures du Théâtre Contemporain,* speaking of Henry Bernstein, said, "Who will deliver us from the immortal, everlasting theme of

adultery, with its manifold variations, innumerable as human heart-beats, I admit, but equally monotonous, and of which we finally become weary? Who will find for us another motive of dramatic interest, besides these husbands invariably deceived by their weary-hearted wives, misunderstood, uncomprehended, to whom life has not given the things they lusted for, Parisian and provincial Bovarys who renew their youth and become modern. . . . Yes, what a novelty it would be and what an audacity! What a sigh of relief we should breathe in escaping from this horrible banality, which theatrical convention fastens upon us, according to which apparently no genuine dramatic motive can exist except unhappy and guilty passion, the deceived husband and the thousand consequences!"

That admirable French critic, M. Henry Bordeaux, in the same year in which appeared Mr. Dukes's book (1911) relieved his mind in similar fashion in the dedicatory letter to his second volume of *La Vie au Théâtre*. "Yet I also love the theatre after my own fashion, which is not yours. You love it like a collector of specimens, whereas I seek a

mirror of contemporary life, and indeed of all life. That means that I am often deceived. For a long time our stage was the most accurate expression of our literature. Our race, particularly sociable, was eagerly fond of movement, charm, and powerful analysis. We found there fine social and individual analysis, a study of characters fashioned by the work of centuries, our own clear and ardent feelings. But too many conventions, exigencies and intrigues came in. Today the theatre has ceased to represent us as we are. With some exceptions, a new romanticism disfigures us. It is a romanticism sensual, worldly, even savage. Our stage heroes seem born quite alone, with no one to help, and if they marry they never have children. Thus their life is represented as totally lacking in duties. The only thing they do is to make the most of it selfishly. We know well enough that life is a little more complex than that, and the only truly interesting conflicts are those where struggle men and women who have a moral conscience. Apart from that, these are nothing but the gambols of brutes. Therefore it is not unprofitable to indicate, when new plays ap-

pear, what lowers dramatic art and what elevates it."

The late Paul Hervieu (1857–1915) was often called an "intellectual" dramatist; in reality his plays are empty, and not a single one is important. He showed ingenuity in *L'Enigme,* where the audience as well as the husbands endeavour to discover which wife is the adulteress; in *Le Dédale,* a new note is sounded on the triangle—the chief musical instrument known in the French theatre—where the former husband seduces his divorced wife. The entire works of Capus may be summed up in one weary, ironical smile. Donnay's best play is *Paraître,* but it is slight; his much-belauded *L'Autre Danger* is written around the "danger" of an intrigue with a man when he may finally fall in love with your daughter. Then you must stand aside, and let your lover marry your daughter, so as not to interfere with the girl's "happiness." This piece won the French Academy prize in 1903. But the subject was much better handled in Maupassant's novel, *Fort comme la Mort,* and for that matter in *Bel-Ami.* Of Bataille's plays, *La Vierge Folle* is as good or bad as the

average. Lavedan, in addition to the study of a cynical Don Juan in *Le Marquis de Priola,* wrote a clever piece called *Le Duel,* where two brothers, a priest and an atheistical physician, fight for a married woman. There is room for admirable acting here, and it is a good stage-play. But it is full of tricks. Of all the Parisian playwrights, the most dexterous is Henry Bernstein. In the theatre one comes under his spell, for he makes a series of situations so exciting that one forgets the unreality of the characters and of their adventures. Perhaps *La Griffe* is his "strongest" piece, though *La Rafale* is thrilling; in *Le Secret* we have a truer and deeper psychology.

That excellent critic, M. Adolphe Brisson, condemned the contemporary French drama in much the same fashion as M. Bordeaux, and the published correspondence between him and the playwrights who resented his strictures, makes interesting reading. He gave a preliminary sign of his final outbreak in his remarks on Bernstein's *La Rafale.* "He is a very intelligent man. And perhaps too intelligent. The sureness of his art, the perfection of his skill, the infallible accuracy

of his aim have something which is a bit disquieting, something that chills. One would like to feel that a heart was beating behind this tragedy; one could wish that it was less implacably clever, softened with a tear. One would even like to see a little awkwardness and true feeling. The play is inhuman; I will say 'superhuman,' if M. Bernstein prefers that word. But I should like it better if it were simply human. *Mais quoi!* Am I going to grumble against my pleasure? Was I bored? No, indeed. Was I amused? Infinitely. . . . *Alors . . . Alors, mettons que je n'ai rien dit et que cette nuance n'existe que dans ma seule imagination.*"

That is about the way an honest spectator feels; we are grateful to the author for such diabolical cleverness, but we miss the touch of nature. It is just possible—I saw signs of it in *Le Secret*—that in the future he may add to his gifts as a playwright the power of the dramatist. There is no hope for his rivals.

The only difference between the typical modern French drama, apart from the excellence of the acting, and the modern American drama, is that most of the French plays end

tragically and ours end sweetly. But murder, suicide and separation do not necessarily indicate works of art.

After going to Parisian theatres scores of times, I am convinced that their modern playwrights, together with the high prices, have had a generally debasing effect. We are accustomed to think of a Parisian audience as highly intelligent, sophisticated, discriminating; really it is not so. In their attitude towards both mirth and sentiment, they are not a whit better than the audience at New York matinées. The intelligent people stay at home, I suppose—and when they think of the price of a theatre ticket, they buy a good book.

The one indisputable superiority of Paris over New York is the team-acting; it is always a pleasure to go to the Comédie Française, and see the results of tradition and sound training. What a pity that such intelligence, such skill, such art is employed on work so trivial!

After I had written the above paragraphs my belief that the French theatre has been debased by adultery-mongers and shallow trickery is strengthened by reading in the

London *Mercury* for September, 1920, a *Letter from France on the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier,* written by M. Albert Thibaudet, in which he says: "The theatre in Paris is at this moment passing through a very grave crisis. It is not a commercial crisis. The theatres continue to have full houses and to realise satisfactory receipts. But their prosperity is built on the ruins of delicacy and taste. The clientèle of profiteers which makes the fortune of the theatres demands and encourages productions in its own image."

Apart from the dramatists that I shall mention in a moment, one of the best twentieth century plays produced by professional manufacturers of drama is *Les Affaires sont Les Affaires,* (1903) written by the late Octave Mirbeau, (1850–1917), his only good piece. With the marvellous acting of M. Féraudy, this tragedy made a tremendous impression, and I shall remember it so long as I live. That it did not depend mainly on the actor, however, is shown by its success all over Germany, in the Scandinavian countries, at Petrograd, London, and New York. Albert Guinon, who wrote a number of iron-

ical tragedies, and who was one of those who resented the criticisms of M. Brisson, achieved a masterpiece in *Décadence,* where the dialogue is amazingly brilliant. This was produced in 1901, and for some reason, attracted little attention, and was quickly forgotten. When I was in Paris in 1903, I had the greatest difficulty in finding a copy; most bookshops had never heard of it, and finally I persuaded one bookseller to let me go down in the basement of his emporium, where we found it, covered with dust. In 1904, some manager resurrected it on the stage; it had a prodigious success, and sent the sale of the book into thousands. Paul Flat, in the *Revue Bleue,* wrote about it in a state of exaltation; the play immediately appeared on the German stage, where it was the subject of endless discussion in the press. The "conflict" here is between decayed French aristocracy and newly rich Jews, and any reader who wants a sensation may be confidently referred to this book.

I think it would be a good thing for French drama if the French stage were more hospitable to foreign dramatists. The famous critic Sarcey named his dog Ibsen as a sign

of contempt, and so far as I know the only play of Shaw that has appeared on the stage is *Candida.*

Several reactions have taken place against the lack of cerebration in modern French drama. Every one knows of Brieux—*l'honnête* Brieux—as French critics called him before he was elevated to the Academy. He has been overpraised by Shaw, and many of his plays are simply theses, but he has brains and character. He has felt keenly the disgrace that modern French writers have brought on the fair name of France, and he has attempted to combat this both in the press and on the stage. He is tremendously in earnest and has a big heart—in his most recent play he has endeavoured to make Frenchmen and Americans understand each other. In *La Française,* a charming comedy, written before the war, he wished to explain to America that French women were not necessarily lacking in virtue. He therefore introduced an American cowboy, who has been "seeing the sights" in Paris, and a Harvard student, who, by the way, speaks French more correctly than English. The cowboy tries to make love to a sensible, humorous

French matron, and the Harvard student is absurdly formal and stilted. Both are cured. Brieux is a force in modern Literature, but I think his best play is one of his earliest, *Blanchette,* which deals with a problem as applicable to America as to France—what is going to become of our high school girls? Brieux represents France rather than Paris; he has never felt at home on the Boulevards. One critic said of him, "He writes only to fight." Well, he has found plenty of things to attack.

M. Brieux lives in a different world from that of his contemporaries. When he visited America in 1914 (the French could not have sent a better unofficial representative) he was generous in giving interviews, although he confessed that they were torture. He had somehow the blunt sincerity of the countryman combined with urbanity. In the New York *Times* for 15 November 1914, he said frankly, "I consider that the drama, like other forms of literature, may legitimately be used as an instrument for the amelioration of social conditions. Of course, this truth has not always been recognised. But Diderot, the father of bourgeois drama, knew

that it could be so used. And there is Molière—practically all his plays voice a thesis of social import. My life-work is to use the theatre in an endeavour to better conditions, and my sincere wish, my greatest wish, is that at the end of my life there may be a little less suffering on this earth."

Although he was keenly interested in the composition of the American cocktail, as readers of *La Française* would know, he made the following prophecies during the war in *Le Journal,* in answer to the question, What will be the lot of French women after the war?

1. Man will give up alcoholism. But he must be helped and his excuse that the saloon is the poor man's club taken away.

2. Man will respect woman and no longer treat her as a being, puny, weak and compulsorily submissive.

3. The abominable marriage dowry institution will disappear. People will marry not to settle down when youth is over, but in full youth, to live together all their lives, with the risks at the beginning, the struggles during the years and the joys of success.

4. Mothers will teach their sons to respect women.

5. No honest woman will be at peace while she knows that somewhere another woman is forced into the street through physical or moral misery.

Paul Bourget is of course reactionary in art, morals and religion. In his youthful education he received a thorough grounding in both science and classical literature. He and Brunetière were schoolmates, colleagues as teachers, and fellow Academicians—they were in absolute harmony mentally, and in the novels of one and the critical essays of the other, we see the same aim. Bourget's earlier novels are, however, quite different in tone from the later ones. The complete Bourget as we know him to-day, ardent Catholic, aristocrat, conservative, moralist, may be found in his novel *L'Etape*, published in 1902. His plays, like all the rest of his work, are in desperate earnest. But while one may applaud both his idealism and his literary skill, his dramas would have a wider influence if they had some humour, some esprit, some charm, some sparkle. He is probably the most conservative man of letters in France. His views might be summed up as follows: first, monarchy is better than democracy; second, independence in religious

thought is neither necessary nor desirable; join the Catholic Church, which can settle for you every dogma and every moral emergency; third, absolute union of church and state; fourth (and here, *mirabile dictu,* he is in harmony with H. L. Mencken, what a team!) don't try to mix social classes; stay at home and remain in your own social circle.

With all his literary gifts and intellectual endowment, the influence of such a man is not only limited, but it is greatest where it is least needed. He comes to call the righteous, not the sinners, to repentance.

One of the severest possible criticisms of the modern French theatre may be found in the fact that Maeterlinck did not dare to trust his delicate *Blue Bird* to a Parisian audience; he sent it off to Moscow, where the first performance took place in the Russian language. From there it flew all over the world, and finally reached Paris.

Besides the social revolt of Brieux, and the religious revolt of Bourget, there was of course a rebellion in art. Just as Germany had the *Freie Bühne,* where Hauptmann's world-shaking *Vor Sonnenaufgang* was per-

formed in 1889, so in Paris in the year 1887 was founded the *Théâtre Libre,* by a young man who was to become the most distinguished French Theatre Director of modern times, M. André Antoine. Miss Constance Mackay, in her book, *The Little Theatre in the United States,* quotes the late Jules Lemaître, himself a clever playwright and great critic: "We had the air of good Magi in mackintoshes seeking out some lowly, but glorious manger. Can it be that in this manger the decrepit and doting drama is destined to be born again?" The drama was not reborn in that humble place, but from this experiment the idea of the "Little Theatre" spread all over the world, and is today exerting a vast influence for good.

The drama was not reborn there because it needed a man of genius, and he was not forthcoming. They already had Henry Becque as a model, but none of the young writers were capable of following him—he himself was neglected in Paris, and so late as 1903, Antoine, in a newspaper interview, called attention to the fact that it was impossible to discover in Père-Lachaise the exact place where Becque was buried. Finally

in 1908, at the corner of two avenues in the city, a bust was placed in his honour.

The best play written for the *Théâtre Libre* was *Blanchette,* by Brieux, which is still his masterpiece. Two other dramatists of importance were given an opportunity—François de Curel and Emile Fabre. During the war Curel's *Ame en Folie,* played at a little, unfashionable theatre, made a sensational success. Soon another theatre was founded —this time for the writers of symbolistic and romantic dramas—the *Théâtre de L'Œuvre,* by an admirable scholar and actor, Lugné Poë. They had their man of genius in Maeterlinck, to write both romantic and symbolistic dramas, and they drew freely on Ibsen for symbolism, presenting *The Master Builder.* In March 1895, the company, headed by Mr. Poë, came to London, and presented Maeterlinck's *L'Intruse* and *Pélléas and Mélisande,* and also Ibsen's *Master Builder* and *Rosmersholm.* At that time Bernard Shaw was slashing everything in the *Saturday Review,* but his ironical spirit was first subdued and then made worshipful by this new example of French art. He wrote,

"M. Lugné-Poë and his dramatic company

called 'L'Œuvre' came to us with the reputation of having made Ibsen cry by their performance of one of his works. There was not much in that; I have seen performances by English players which would have driven him to suicide. But when the first act of *Rosmersholm* had hardly begun on Monday night, when I recognised, with something like excitement, the true atmosphere of this most enthralling of all Ibsen's works rising like an enchanted mist for the first time on an English stage. . . . The performance of Maeterlinck's *Pélléas and Mélisande* . . . settled the artistic superiority of M. Lugné-Poë's company to the Comédie Française. When I recall the last evening I spent at that institution . . . when I compare this depressing experience with last Tuesday evening at the Théâtre de L'Œuvre, I can hardly believe that the same city produced the two. In the Comédie Française there is nothing but costly and highly organised routine, deliberately used, like the ceremonial of a court, to make second-rate human material presentable. In the Théâtre de L'Œuvre there is not merely the ordinary theatrical intention, but a vigilant artistic conscience in the diction, the

stage action, and the stage picture, producing a true poetic atmosphere, and triumphing easily over shabby appointments and ridiculous incidents."

Meanwhile the conventional French drama goes on—Capus, Donnay, Bataille, Lavedan, Bernstein and MM. De Flers and Caillavet reap their harvest. They are facile, accomplished, witty, entertaining; when they are placed beside their English contemporaries, Barrie, Galsworthy, Shaw, Ervine, Masefield, Barker, they become diminished. In comparison with the best British dramatists of to-day, they are like children playing with blocks in the same room with authors writing books.

One man of genius, however, is better than many manikins; and modern France has contributed to the literature of the world the greatest play since the days of Shakespeare, and the greatest drama since Goethe's *Faust*. From any and every point of view, Edmond Rostand is a giant. He is great in so many different ways—great as poet, dramatist, playwright, wit, humorist, romantic idealist, satirist; and as a language-virtuoso he is equally supreme. His dramatic works con-

sist of six plays—three minor, three major; they are a permanent addition to literature; they contain characters that will last as long as the best of Victor Hugo and the best of old Alexandre Dumas, which means they will last as long as good books are read.

It is astonishing how much one man can give to his country; it is true that three plays by Rostand are not only worth all the plays written by other Frenchmen during the last thirty years, but that they represent a creative splendour in the theatre that has not been witnessed since Shakespeare. The first night of *Cyrano* was the greatest first night on any stage within the memory of living man; the first night of *Chantecler* was the prime news of the world.

Just as Normandy produced those bitter realists, Flaubert and Guy de Maupassant, whose novels and tales so perfectly illustrate the heart-killing climate of their native land, so our glorious romantic poet came from the South, and the sunshine that flooded his childhood glows on every page of his dramas. It is strange that his works should be so inspiring, for his heroes are always beaten, his best plays are all tragedies; yet, as one critic

said, "Death in Rostand is more cheerful than Life in Maeterlinck."

Edmond Rostand was born at Marseilles on 1 April 1868, and was the finest piece of humour produced on that memorable day, as *Cyrano* was the best Christmas present that the world had received for a hundred years. His father had wealth, education and brains --a brilliant journalist, who edited and translated the poems of Catullus. The boy went to southern schools, where his personality was developed rather than repressed; then he became a student at Stanislas College in Paris, and took a degree in law in 1890. Like so many others, he "abandoned law for literature," published a volume of poems and married a French poet, Rosemonde Gérard. Her poems are remarkable, and if she had not married Rostand, she would be independently famous; but you cannot see the stars after sunrise.

When he was twenty years old, his first play, a one-act comedy, *Le Gant Rouge,* was played at the Cluny Theatre, 24 August 1888, and it passed practically unnoticed. Rostand in later times remarked, "There is nothing to be said about it, except that it was the

first realisation of a dream that has always haunted me as a child, and that was that I must write for the stage."

He wrote another one-act comedy in verse, took it to the Comédie Française, and Féraudy requested another act; he then finished *Les Romanesques,* which received the Toirac prize of four thousand francs for the best piece submitted to the Comédie during the season 1890–1891, but he had to wait three years to see it performed. It was played for the first time 21 May 1894. Its sparkling freshness and vernal charm attracted the critics, and gave the author what might be called a mild reputation. He was hailed as a humorist, and he said that people already had him classified, and looked only for fun in his next work.

In the autumn of this same year, at the house of Sarah Bernhardt, Coquelin being also present, the young poet read aloud *La Princesse Lointaine,* which captivated the two actors. Coquelin predicted a great future, little knowing that Rostand would surpass all prophecies, and hand his own name down to posterity. On 5 April 1895, the new play was produced with Sarah Bernhardt

as Mélissinde, Guitry and Jean Coquelin being also in the cast; it was not particularly successful; the only play by its author that it is really better to read than to see. Sarcey, who, with all his cleverness, was so often blind, failed to see anything in it; and it is amusing to read Bernard Shaw's criticism when the great actress put on the play in London, 17 June 1895. The arch-enemy of romance ridiculed it. Shaw reviewing Rostand is like a harp solo criticised by Mephistopheles.

On 14 April 1897, came the first performance, on Wednesday of Holy Week, of *La Samaritaine; Evangile en trois tableaux, en vers.* This cannot be said to have been completely successful, yet the dramatist was more than satisfied. "I only allowed it to be played during Holy Week. . . . But what gave me the most delight in its success was that I had not only demonstrated to the critics and to the public that I was something more than a writer of comedies, but that I had proved it to myself."

In the same year his name was blown by the trumpets of fame to the four winds of heaven, for on 28 December 1897, came the

first performance of *Cyrano de Bergerac,* which ran for over three hundred consecutive nights. No one believed that he could duplicate this success, but he did. On 15 March 1900, with Sarah Bernhardt in the title rôle, appeared *L'Aiglon;* this tragedy convinced the world that a living man was one of the greatest dramatists of all time. The next year, 1901, Rostand was elected to the French Academy, being the youngest ever chosen, barely thirty-three. His discourse in 1903, when he was publicly received, is an important document in modern literature.

We should pay high tribute to the artistic conscience of Rostand. I suppose no modern writer was naturally more gifted with impromptu poetry and wit; his inspiration was chronic. Surely it is to his credit that from 1901 to 1918 he produced only one work.

Yet how ardently I hope that his drama on *Faust,* which he had been writing for years, may have been sufficiently advanced for the fragment some day to appear!

Ten years passed between *L'Aiglon* and *Chantecler.* It was impossible for Rostand to live in Paris, not only because of delicate health, but because he could not take a walk

on the street without being followed by adoring crowds. This public homage, which was the breath of life to Victor Hugo, was unendurable to the young poet. He went down to Cambo in the Pyrenees, built a huge chateau, and spent his days there in happy retirement. He changed his mind a thousand times about *Chantecler,* which of course he intended to be played by Coquelin. Rehearsals would begin only to be stopped by a telegram from the author; manuscript would be sent to the press, only to be similarly recalled. When one reads the piece, one understands; it bristles with turns of wit and plays on words. No doubt as soon as he had put the precious writing in the post he thought of an additional jewel. He waited too long, however, for Coquelin died in 1909.

Finally on 7 February 1910, came the long-awaited first night of *Chantecler.* It seemed as though the whole world awaited the verdict with breathless suspense. And the world was right. Creative genius is the most valuable gift that man can receive, truly exceeding in importance all other things. A new work by the foremost dramatist in the world was the greatest news then

possible. The new play came just at the time when Paris was suffering from an unprecedented disaster—devastating floods; but France forgot mortal woe in immortal art. I say the world was right in awaiting this birth with hushed expectation; it speaks well for the public in all countries that their eyes were turned toward Paris.

It is easy to laugh: it is easy to sneer at all this as wonderful advertising. People laugh now at Barnum's wonderful preliminary advertising of Jenny Lind. It certainly was wonderful, but there was one thing more wonderful, and that was Jenny Lind.

The important fact remains that the announcement of the first night of this play was the leading feature in the news of the world. As people in Paris forgot the floods, people in New York forgot the market. Here is a drama that has no concern with the ordinary obsessions of mankind—war, politics, lust, money. Here is a drama making no temporary or opportune appeal. Here is a drama known in advance to be nothing except a work of art. And yet, in every city in the world, and in thousands of villages, it loomed up as the foremost fact. It was the greatest

triumph known in modern times for Art and Letters—and the greatest rout of the Philistines. On the morning following the first night of the play in Paris, a daily newspaper in Butte, Montana, devoted not the first column, but the entire first page to *Chantecler!*

During the darkest hours of the war, the French people kept hearing the clarion voice of their poet, announcing the sunrise of victory, and immediately after the day of victory dawned, the voice became still. Rostand died on 2 December 1918.

In the *Vorspiel auf dem Theater* to *Faust*, Goethe, in language that is as applicable in 1920 as it was when written, allows three persons to present their views. The eternal divergence of the three, and the necessity of some combination of all, have been presented with such profound wisdom and understanding of both the theatre and human nature, that no one has added anything valuable to it for a hundred years. The three debaters are the Manager, the Poet, and the Clown. The Manager insists on a play of action, that will really interest all the varieties of men and women that make up the audience; the Poet insists on Idealism, Romance, and

Beauty, for the people must not only be uplifted, they must be transported; the Clown wants to make them laugh, even if it ruins the piece. The plays of Shakespeare—that is, the best of them—supremely illustrate the triple combination. They are full of poetry and beauty, alive with humour, and swift in action. The audience is amused, is excited, and is inspired.

No modern dramatist has reached this Shakespearean level except Rostand. He is equally great as poet, as humorist, as practical playwright. No man of our time has been such a creative force in literature, and possessed such a knowledge of the requirements of the stage. It is inspiring to read his dramas, as many millions of readers know; but it is even more inspiring to see his plays performed, for they were all written for the stage. The sheer dexterity of the first act of *Cyrano,* the way the throngs of people are brought in and brought off the stage, the way the general confused excitement rises to one tremendous climax, would be a model for playwrights, even if the piece were not literature. As every one knows,

Cyrano fights a duel while composing a ballade, exhibiting equal skill with his hand and with his mind. It is symbolical of the author; in the very whirlwind of action, he gives us exquisite poetry.

There was a foretaste of this power in *Les Romanesques,* which is a little masterpiece, and which, despite its eclipse by the later works, continues to hold the French stage, and perhaps will never become obsolete. It is beautiful, it is charming, it is humorous, but above all it is interesting. Most pieces submitted to managers are either specimens of good literary composition with no action, or else melodramas or farces of no literary value. In writing *Les Romanesques,* Rostand wisely forsook subjects of temporary interest in sociology or politics, and based his work on the fundamental and therefore permanent things in human nature. In the poem *Transcendentalism,* Browning compares the writer of a treatise on plants with the magician who fills a room with roses. He leaves us in no doubt as to which of these methods should characterise the poet. Many authors of modern analytical plays are like

students of botany; Rostand creates flowers. He is a poet and a playwright; but above all he is a magician.

It is true that in *La Princesse Lointaine* and in *La Samaritaine* the poet transcends the playwright; but one of these was an experiment in tragedy, and the other a contribution to religious thought. They both helped him to write *Cyrano de Bergerac.*

In the year 1842, Browning published a lyric called *Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli.* The fact that Rostand chose the same subject for *La Princesse Lointaine* is not important; but it is important to observe, how, not only in this play, but in *Cyrano* and in *Chantecler,* Browning's philosophy of "Success through Failure" is illustrated. The English poet and the French dramatist have much in common; they were preoccupied with love, real love; they believed that the highest success comes only through failure; they represented their teachings of optimism mainly through Tragedy. Browning might have written English words corresponding to the dying speech of Joffroy:

Ah! je m'en vais,—n'ayant à souhaiter plus rien!
Merci, Seigneur! Merci, Mélissinde!—Combien,

Moins heureux, épuisés d'une poursuite vaine
Meurent sans avoir vu leur Princesse lointaine!

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, plays founded on the Bible became increasingly frequent. Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* (1893), Rostand's *La Samaritaine* (1897), Sudermann's *Johannes* (1898), Stephen Phillips's *Herod* (1900) are typical illustrations of a growing fashion. The most poetic and the most reverent is certainly *La Samaritaine,* though it lacks the dramatic intensity of Wilde's short piece. The only reason why it disappoints is because no one has ever yet been able to retell a Bible story and improve it. The simplicity of the Bible narratives cannot be matched. For Rostand's verse, in all its glory, is not arrayed like one of these.

Yet *La Samaritaine* is a tenderly beautiful tribute paid by a man of genius; and I shall always regret that I never heard the melodious poetry spoken by the voice of gold.

Rostand himself was more than satisfied by the success of the play. In the printed version, he has the following foreword: "I thank Madame Sarah Bernhardt, who was a Flame and a Prayer . . . the Parisian pub-

lic, whose earnestness, emotion, and intelligent excitement in responding to my most subtle meanings, have once more reassured the Poets; the Critics, who gave me noble support."

Have once more reassured the poets—it is as a rule only the minor and the unsuccessful poets who complain of the public attitude toward their work. The public is disposed to greet with enthusiasm poems of genius—nearly all great poets are properly "placed" by the public during their lifetime. The tiny poets who attack the public for not praising and appreciating their efforts would have no complaint to make if they could write better.

It is a curious thing, in the present high tide of the drama, and remembering that the glory of English literature is its poetry, that we have no great modern English dramas in verse. It is all the more remarkable because the foremost modern French dramatist and the foremost modern German dramatist wrote their masterpieces in verse form—*Cyrano de Bergerac* by Rostand and *Die versunkene Glocke,* by Hauptmann. John Masefield, when he writes plays, writes them in prose,

with only slight exceptions. And so, for the most part have Synge, Yeats, Lord Dunsany and others. George Meredith might have written poetic dramas in the Elizabethan manner. Thomas Hardy's *Dynasts* is an intellectual, rather than a poetic masterpiece—it has nothing of the sublime, emotional, thrilling, transporting power of Rostand. We admire the author's mind more than the work.

Rostand was not an unconscious or an accidental Romantic. He had his own programme, and his six plays represent it. He lifted the French drama and the French spirit out of the Slough of Despond, and led them, like Greatheart, toward the Celestial City. He was disgusted with the cynicism, the sensuality, the mockery that many had come to believe were the true representation of modern French literature. In the year 1912, I read an article by a French critic who said that nowadays the only possible intelligent attitude toward the so-called "great problems" of life was a smile. In the same year I read a good-tempered criticism of a new play in Paris, where the critic said with a yawn, "After all, Flesh is the Queen of

Paris. And if there were any God, he would certainly treat our Paris as he treated Sodom and Gomorrah."

The prevailing tone of *blague* was insupportable to Rostand. He knew that France needed an awakening. His plays, poems, and addresses were one protest against Mockery —when he was received into the French Academy on 4 June 1903, his speech was a call to arms, "The poison of to-day, with which we have no longer the right to drug the people, is that delicious essence that stupefies conviction and slays energy. We must restore passion. Yes, and emotion, too, which really is not absurd. We must remind these timid Frenchmen, who are always afraid of not being sufficiently ironical, that there can be plenty of modern wit in a resolute eye."

Little did he know how soon the spirit that he incarnated in himself, and in his poetry would be needed to save his country from slavery. Apart from the literary elevation of his dramas, *Cyrano de Bergerac* during the years of horror was worth to France a dozen generals and a million men. All the world wondered at the spirit of desperate

valour and astounding tenacity exhibited by "decadent" France. But she had been regenerated by the spirit of her great poet, and the opportunity revealed the truth.

In spite of, and partly because of, his popularity, many French critics have refused him a place in the front rank. The very spirit that he fought was bound to sneer at him, knowing that the two could not live together. But that is not the chief reason for so much French depreciation. It is because, he, like Victor Hugo, fought not merely against the schoolmen, but against the national literary instinct. Many Frenchmen have never admitted the greatness of Victor Hugo, though he is one of the idols of the world; they still believe that his work is fustian. I remember in 1903 a French literary man telling me in all seriousness that Victor Hugo was mere sound and fury, signifying nothing; nor did he refer to *Ruy Blas* and *Hernani:* he said, "Fifty years hence every line of Victor Hugo will be forgotten, while Flaubert will be greater than ever." For my part, I cannot see why Frenchmen should not be proud of both; why should admiration for one lessen the other's glory? But your true French-

man loves the lapidary style; and for this reason, many French critics cannot see Rostand, while others perhaps are afraid to surrender. I am going to quote a letter that I received from a distinguished French novelist and essayist, who is just now known all over the world. I had sent him a criticism of the theatres of Paris I wrote in 1912, which I had written after seeing five or six typical triangle plays, followed by a performance of *L'Aiglon*.

"21 April 1912.

"I thank you for the article which you were kind enough to send me. I read it with great interest and I sympathise with your point of view. I believe your strictures are both fair and sound. But the only author whom you praise—Rostand—is one of those whom I most strongly condemn. If it is true (and I firmly believe it to be) that the theatre ought to be the mirror of its time, I cannot reproach the Parisian theatres of the boulevards for representing the brutal lack of morality characteristic of the society there represented. And from this point of view, I regard a Bataille as the most significant of the Parisian playwrights; for he best represents

the moral anarchy and the extreme refinement of intelligence, where we now find the élite (a worldly élite) of an old people, very artistic, very human and very corrupt. I can consider him (and I do consider him) as an enemy; I hope for the destruction of the society that he represents: but I recognise his art and his sincerity: he does his duty like an artist: he is true to life. The Rostand of *L'Aiglon* and of *La Princesse Lointaine* is not. The soul of his dramas consists of fanfaronnade, declamation, false heroism, false love, every sentiment false. He is a brilliant virtuoso. His work, often defective, has always éclat; but he is at his best only with the fantasies of a pianist: whenever he wants to give a fine phrase of Beethoven, a simple and profound sentiment, his inadequacy and his superficiality appear. Nor am I less severe toward the interpreter of *L'Aiglon,* this Sarah Bernhardt, for I regard her as an evil influence on the French poetic drama. The radiance of her fame throws an illusion over her lack of naturalness, her faulty diction, her foreign accent, her real coldness, and her monotonous, hammered-out art. I am willing to believe that her defects are exagger-

ated by age; but it is precisely her defects that people admire and imitate. She has done a great deal of harm, and she makes matters worse by her deplorable taste in preferring false, offensive poetry. The hero of my novel and his author will never forgive her."

Although I have read many adverse French criticisms of Rostand, I think this letter is not only the ablest, but that the opposition to his work,—generally felt among French critics—is here expressed in an extraordinarily concise way. Although I totally disagree, it is perfectly clear why the writer of it, and so many of his fellow-countrymen, take that position. Rostand offends against their classic theories of art, their love of the sober and the self-restrained, their decided preference of irony over enthusiasm—sure mark of sophistication; they like smiles, but they hate laughter. It is for the same reason that Mr. Santayana, wholly Latin in blood and ideals, cannot endure the poetry of Browning. His poems "not only portray passion, which is interesting, but they betray it, which is odious."

But there is a great, outstanding fact to be accounted for—the conquest of the world by *Cyrano de Bergerac.* To realise now the unparalleled enthusiasm of the first night, I refer readers to Catulle Mendès; that grown-up gamin of the Boulevards, who could give any man in the world lessons in blague, skepticism, indecency and insolence, was swept into the seventh heaven of rapture—he preserved not only his own impressions in print, but collected others. The delight of the audience was so uncontrolled that the play could hardly get on—the nearest approach to it in America is the behaviour of the spectators when a touchdown is made in a football game. The applause in the theatre on that memorable night was heard next day in the remotest parts of the earth. The play appeared on every foreign stage—over half a million copies of the French text have been sold, and it has been translated into all languages. While I am writing these words, converts are being made in many countries. For the book goes everywhere.

Rostand, taking an almost forgotten historical figure, (I remember in my youth reading Henry Morley's edition of *Gulliver's*

Travels, with its interesting appendix on *Cyrano de Bergerac*), created a new, imperishable character in drama and in literature. Critics may sneer at Rostand's art, they may attempt to "account" for him in every way but the one true way, but they can no more drive Cyrano off the earth than they can get rid of d'Artagnan, Jean Valjean, or Falstaff. He has come to stay.

Even those who attack Rostand are puzzled by the variety and multiplicity of his accomplishments; he has all the grandeur and impromptu power of Victor Hugo, but then he abounds in what Hugo had not a trace of —humour. He has grace, dexterity, flexibility, word-magic; he uses the rigid form of the Alexandrine and makes it supple; he reaches the vertiginous heights of sublimity, heroism, self-sacrifice, and adds to the Genius of Romance the Genius of Humour. All kinds of humour—for he can defeat his rivals and leave them the choice of weapons.

It is amusing to see the critics trying to explain this. M. Blum, a French dramatic critic, says that Rostand is not a man of genius, but an extraordinary collection of diverse talents, seldom united in one person.

M. Adolphe Brisson once made a pilgrimage to Cambo, to see if he could find out from the author the reason for Cyrano's world conquest. On his way he meditated as follows, as he reports in the last chapter of *Le Théâtre et Les Mœurs*: "That we loved, applauded, acclaimed *Cyrano,* nothing is easier to understand; the beauties of the work justify all that. But that from day to day it spread immediately all over the world, that it was translated into all languages, played not only in large cities, but in the smallest towns and in America, and that everywhere it excited the same enthusiasm; that three hundred thousand copies of the book (1906), something unprecedented, should have been sold all over the earth, that the name of the author traversed the globe with the rapidity of a flash of lightning—all this is unique and calls for an explanation. For, after all, we have other masterpieces as brilliant, as clever as *Cyrano.* Why have they not had the same good fortune? Fame is an honest fellow, who usually walks with slow steps, and ordinarily does not place a crown except on brows mature, with whitening hair. Why, when *Cyrano* appeared, did

Fame suddenly grow dizzy?" Then, being shown in the presence of M. et Mme. Rostand, he plumped the question direct, "What is there in *Cyrano* to account for its sudden universal conquest? What is it exactly that foreigners find in it?" Rostand himself had no explanation to offer; he could not explain, said M. Brisson, why it was that his piece produced exactly the same effect on people quite different, the English, the Danish, the Slavs, the Turks, the Heidelberg philosopher, and the pork-packer from Cincinnati. "Was it the classic simplicity of the intrigue, the mingling of wit and courage, what we call *le panache,* the generosity of the hero, the contrast between his physical ugliness and his moral nobility, this antithesis which pleases men because they think that they all have something of it themselves? But these features exist in other works: Triboulet came before Cyrano, and in the plays of de Musset, there is not less feeling, French sprightliness, fantasy—*Alors. . . .*"

"Mme. Edmond Rostand, who listened to my dissertation with a little, half-mocking smile: 'There are people who exhale all around them sympathy, simply because they

have charm. Don't you think it may be the same with things of the mind?' *Parbleu,* that is the best explanation, the true one! It explains nothing and it is the best one. For I believe that a work of art has a soul belonging to it, which attracts or repels, and arouses passionate feeling. One may surrender, be vanquished by a painting, a statue, a poem. Between fifteen and twenty years of age I was hopelessly in love with the Mona Lisa."

Richard Mansfield gave an admirable and highly intelligent performance of *Cyrano de Bergerac* in America; M. Le Bargy reached unexpected heights; no one will perhaps ever reach the perfection attained by Coquelin, who was a great artist, ideally fitted to the part, and who had the advantage of long and intimate discussions with the author; but the piece will never be lost to the stage, and will always awaken enthusiasm.

It is particularly unfortunate that an American court, a Chicago judge presiding, decided that Rostand had not written *Cyrano,* but had stolen it from an obscure American writer. We may laugh at this, but it was the cause of Mansfield abandoning the play, as

he refused to pay royalties to the American "author," and it may prevent any American performances in the future. Only last year Edward Vroom, a romantic actor of talent, was informed that he would be sued by the widow of the legal author, if he persisted in his preparations to produce it.

The best translation ever made of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is undoubtedly the German version by Ludwig Fulda; it has been Englished many times, but no successful translation has ever been published. Yet it is not impossible. It would be a boon to have a version as good as Bayard Taylor's translation of *Faust,* or one equal to Constance Garnett's renderings of the Russian novelists. But first-rate translators have always been more rare than first-rate creative authors.

As we owe to Richard Mansfield the opportunity to see *Cyrano* on the American stage, so we owe to Maude Adams the American presentations of *L'Aiglon* and *Chantecler.* She was loudly denounced for attempting the latter, but I admired her *Chantecler* even more than her *L'Aiglon.* Physique is important perhaps, but not necessary to per-

sons in the audience who have imagination; and it is never so important as brains. Mrs. Fiske was more convincing as *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* than a handsome chorus girl would have been; in fact, everything about her was Tess except her photograph,

No man has a soul so dead that it cannot be stirred by *Cyrano*. Its combination of lyrical beauty, passion, wit, sentiment, humour, enthusiasm, tragic force, pathos, united in one divine transport of moral beauty—the Soul! Even under those ribs of death, the boards of the French stage, Rostand awakened a soul. And in the autumnal garden, amid the falling leaves, and the chill of death, we hear the voice of that which alone is as sublime as the stars,—the human spirit.

For in all three plays we have Triumphant Failure.

Professor Nitze quotes a poem written by Rostand which was published only a few hours after his death, and harmonises with the spirit in all his work.

Qu'un peuple d'hier
Meure pour demain,
C'est à rendre fier
Tout le genre humain!

I know I ought not to translate this, but I cannot help trying.

> That yesterday's Race
> Should die for to-morrow—
> That gives a proud face
> To all human sorrow!

Rostand did not select the figure of L'Aiglon for any political or historical reason, but as an emblem of the frustration of humanity.

> Grand Dieu! ce n'est pas une cause
> Que j'attaque ou que je defend . . .
> Et ceci n'est pas autre chose
> Que l'histoire d'un pauvre enfant.

The enormous difficulties of presenting *Chantecler* will probably militate against its life on the stage; but in many ways, both from the literary and spiritual point of view, it is Rostand's greatest work. We see as we saw in Wagner's *Meistersinger,* the undying hatred of every heaven-born genius for Pedantry and Affectation. Let the second-rate artists stick to the rules—they need them. Let the second-rate critics measure genius with the rules, they have no other

standard. But the man of original creative power is always greater than the rules; as in the moral world, Love is greater than Law.

In the play *Chantecler,* the Peacock is like Beckmesser; the scene infallibly reminds one of the part played by the picayune pedant in the music-drama. In that famous afternoon tea—the greatest "party" ever known in literature, Victor Hugo might have poured out his scorn on the pedants and the prudes and the parlour poets; he might too have thought of the sublime scene where the Cock protects the venomous cowards from the hawk; but he could not even have imagined the marvellous humour that follows the terrific fight, like sunshine after storm. The guests are all going; Chantecler, with a fine *mot,* departs with the hen pheasant; the Guinea-hen hostess, just as the curtain is about to fall, says, "This is the most successful fête ever known!" Then, amid the *brouhaha* of leave-taking, the solemn Magpie-Usher announces an arrival:

The Tortoise!

and the curtain falls.

As every one knows, Rostand conceived the

idea of this drama merely by gazing, in the course of a country walk, at a barn-yard. These humble creatures displayed human nature to the imaginative eyes of the poet. "In 1901, while taking a walk in the outskirts of Cambo, I was passing a humble farm when I suddenly stopped before the barnyard. It was just an ordinary barnyard, containing the usual pigeon loft, wire nettings, manure pile, and within, the animals, hens, ducks, guinea-fowl, geese, turkeys, a cat asleep, a dog wandering about; in brief, a common spectacle. I watched with interest, when suddenly in stalked the cock. He entered proudly, boldly, like a ruler, with disdain in his eye, and a certain rhythmic movement of the head which produced the irresistible impression of a hero. He advanced like a buccaneer, like a man in quest of adventure, a king among his subjects. In a flash I saw in this spectacle a play. I returned to the barnyard many times, and rapidly the framework of the play was constructed in my mind."

That afternoon walk was a great day in the history of literature.

We must go back to La Fontaine for any-

thing approaching this human manipulation of the animal kingdom; and Rostand rises higher than either La Fontaine or Rudyard Kipling. For the old fabulist indicated our undeniable likeness to the instinctive selfishness of the beasts; Kipling drew his usual lesson of industry and practical wisdom; Rostand gave us a spiritual interpretation of life.

Chantecler is man doing his work in the world, doing it anyhow, doing it for the sake of the work finally, rather than for the reward; doing it first conceitedly, then despairingly, finally triumphantly. For work is more necessary to the worker than to any possible recipient of its product. The Hen-Pheasant is jealous of his absorption in his career, she wants him to put love-o' women first, but in the end she is glad to die for him. The dog is a philosopher, and a good fellow. The guinea-hen is a stupid social climber, cursed with affectations. The night-birds prefer darkness to light, because their works are evil. The blackbird is the Parisian mocker—he may be either critic or dramatist.

The oftener one reads the three master-

pieces of Rostand, the greater they seem. And curiously enough, although they abound in individual and scattered jewels of wit, wisdom and poetry, the whole is greater than the parts. In considering this unique personality, many are amazed and many doubt. But the optimism of the man should find a vibratting response in the mind of the reader. It is beyond all expression fortunate that such genius should have been given to the world, that France should have had the honour of producing a writer worthy to rank with the giant Elizabethans in England; but it is still more fortunate that, despite the nibbling tooth of criticism, the whole world should have given him homage. For he spoke directly to the conscience, the spirit, the religious life of man; the universal acclaim that greeted his voice, is proof that under all the materialism and selfishness and vulgarity and baseness of the human race there is a Soul.

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